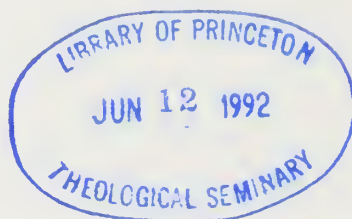




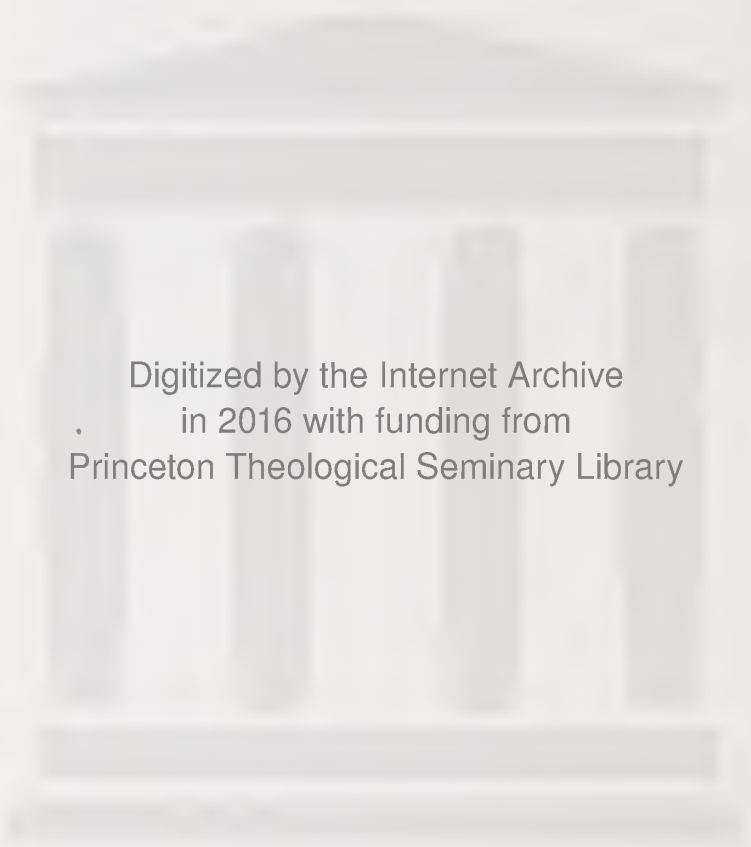
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# THE PRINCETON SEMINARY BULLETIN

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Daniel L. Migliore, EDITOR

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# One God Alone: A Pillar of Biblical Theology

By ULRICH MAUSER

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## I. THE ONE BIBLE

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY begins with the assumption that the Old and New Testaments of the Christian Bible are a unity. The struggles of the ancient church, from the middle of the second century on, for the retention of the Old Testament, and for the formation of a canon of New Testament Scriptures, led to the basic hermeneutical key that the word and act of God through which this God's human community is ever anew constituted is described in the oneness of a single book whose two major parts cannot without peril be separated from each other. For Christian theology, the Old Testament without the New is no document of revelation, and the New Testament without the Old is like a head severed from its body.

Modern biblical theology, therefore, works in conscious, or at least implicit, opposition to those efforts which have driven a wedge between Old and New Testaments. This opposition does not mean that biblical theology today wishes to abandon the rich harvests of historical investigation into biblical documents which the last 250 years have produced: the sensitivity to individual nuances in biblical texts, the ability to see clearly edged contours which distinguish one historical subject from another, the awareness of the manifold changes in the course of history, and the scent for the admixture of social, political, ethnic, and poetic factors with statements of faith—all that must be preserved and further cultivated. Biblical theology beholden to the hermeneutical key of the unity of the Old and the New Testaments will, however, question the mental predisposition which holds that the application of historical-critical methods to biblical texts and interpretations predicated by it invalidate the canonical coordination of the two

Testaments with each other. This lecture attempts to sketch one approach to biblical interpretation in which historical work is not given up, nor the work of comparative religious studies discredited, in which, nonetheless, the essential unity of biblical theology dictates the approach. We have become unaccustomed to this way of reading biblical texts, and this proposal to take seriously the ancient church's basic hermeneutical decision may appear anachronistic, wildly ambitious, and antagonistic to the point of folly to well-established practices of biblical exegesis.

I shall, nevertheless, proceed, and invite you to understand biblical theology as a sustained effort of hearing. Biblical theology seeks to listen to the many and distinctive records, oracles, and visions which are found in this one book as a tone poem of grandiose scope. There are many themes with numerous variations in this tonal edifice; rich harmonies predominate here and shrill discords appear there. Whole sections seem to develop but a single theme in the manner of a counterpoint; others display a most colorful assemblage of motives relishing polyphonic abundance. We find in certain places sentiments and convictions belonging to the most sublime utterances the human heart has ever found, but we discover not too far away from it also some solid sediments of the pedestrian. Who would be the critic of this music who could dare to claim having fully heard and grasped this cathedral of tones? Who could boast of having adequately comprehended even one or two of its greater or smaller themes? Like a music critic, I would like to isolate one single theme in this tone poem, and to offer a sketch of it to your judgment in the hope that it might contribute to a reasoned and confident reappraisal of an approach to biblical interpretation which begins by reading the Bible of the Old and New Testaments as one single book.

## II. THE ONE GOD

One of the most dominant themes throughout the Bible is the declaration of the oneness of God. The proclamation of Deuteronomy, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. 6:4), the first commandment of the Decalogue "you shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3; Deut. 5:7), and the second Isaiah's promulgation of Yahweh's word "I am God, and there is no other" (Isa. 45:22) are but three particularly elevated peaks on a long range of statements and imperatives which runs along the entire history of Israel as the Old Testament captured it. The New Testament continues along the same line. The confession, "there is one God" (1 Tim. 2:5) remains in full force; the cardinal sentence, "God is one" (Rom. 3:30), becomes the impulse for the formation of a new community of world citizens

comprised of Jews and Gentiles, a sentence which can be expanded to the statement, "There is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist" (1 Cor. 8:6).

The most important writers of the post-apostolic age insisted on the same theme. Tertullian declares with emphasis "the Christian truth has distinctly declared this principle, 'God is not, if God is not one'" (*adv. Marc.* I, 3); Origen states "the particular points clearly delivered in the teaching of the apostles are as follows: first, that there is one God, who created and arranged all things" (*De princ.*, praef.4); and Novatian defines God as the one who is "one God, to whose greatness, or majesty, or power, I would not say nothing can be preferred, but nothing can be compared" (*De trin.* 31).

It seems a fact that on this point we have in Bible and tradition such overwhelming agreement that the recognition of God's oneness might well be considered a common sense of Christian faith. We talk of monotheism and regard it as a basis shared not only by all Christian denominations, but also with several non-Christian religions such as Judaism and Islam.<sup>1</sup>

All this seems so easy and self-evident that one might well question the usefulness of the renewed discussion of an issue which appears to be decided. However, the matter has become too easy and too self-evident. The seemingly unquestionable agreement between Bible, tradition, and modern religious awareness shows up, upon closer examination, as a consensus which is manifest only on the surface. In reality, the consensus hides such vast differences of understanding that it must be challenged. It is my thesis that *the Biblical insistence on the oneness of God is so different from the monotheistic consciousness of our time that the almost universal procedure of reading the Bible through the spectacles of a modern monotheist must result in a serious misreading of its message.*<sup>2</sup> There are two points in particular which, for the Biblical theologian, require reconsideration.

### III. THE GOD OF ISRAEL AND OTHER GODS

The Old Testament speaks freely, without any hesitation or embarrassment, about the existence of gods other than the God of Israel. In the Dec-

<sup>1</sup> "The three monotheistic religions are Islam, Judaism, and Christianity," *The Concise Dictionary of the Christian Tradition*, ed. by J. D. Douglas, Walter A. Elwell and Peter Toon, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989, p. 255. Similar statements are frequent in philosophical and theological dictionaries.

<sup>2</sup> Definitions of monotheism in standard encyclopedias and dictionaries are by no means identical. Many, however, insist that the negation of any god, beside the one God affirmed by monotheism, belongs to the definition. A popular, introductory work on theological terms defines monotheism as "Glaube an einen einzigen Gott-unter ausdrücklicher Leugnung der Existenz anderer Götter," *Fachwörterbuch Theologie*, ed. by J. Hanselman, S. Rothenberg, U. Swarat, Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1987.

alogue, the Magna Charta of Israel's law, the first commandment states: "I am Yahweh *your* God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:2f; Deut. 5:6f). The prohibition of other gods is meaningful only if the worship of other gods is a temptation. Thus, rather than denying their existence, the first commandment presupposes that other gods are real. We have plenty of evidence that leaders and people in Israel reckoned for centuries with the existence of gods of other nations as a matter of course. When, in the time of the Judges, Jephthah addressed the King of Ammon in order to warn him against resistance with the example of kings who had tried to withstand Israel and consequently lost their land, he asked him: "Will you not possess what Chemosh your god gives you to possess?" (Judg. 11:24). Some three centuries later, a skirmish between Israel and Moab occurs. The Old Testament reports how the Moabite king was in great distress and, realizing that he was about to lose the battle, he proceeded to sacrifice his eldest son to the protector god of his city to reconcile the god's anger. The surprising thing is that the Old Testament reports as the result of this sacrifice: "there came great wrath upon Israel" (2 Kings 3:27) so that it had to give up the siege and withdraw. The meaning of the remark is obviously that the wrath of the foreign god was turned against Israel so that it could not prevail.<sup>3</sup>

The Psalter makes it plain in many instances that Israel's faith was not threatened by the notion of foreign gods. I cite only one example. Psalm 82 begins: "God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment." Also a cultic song of great antiquity which is preserved in Ex. 15 asks: "Who is like you, O Yahweh, among the gods?" (Ex. 15:11). To be sure, the supremacy of Israel's God over all other gods is everywhere asserted.<sup>4</sup> But the assertion always drives home the dominion of Yahweh over other gods, not the denial of their existence.

The recognition of the facts sketched so far has been a commonplace in Old Testament scholarship for quite some time, but it has also been fre-

<sup>3</sup> The question is still quite undecided, at which time the exclusive devotion to Yahweh in Israel began and what the parameters were within which this exclusiveness was demanded. A concise survey of solutions proposed to this and related problems is given by David L. Petersen, "Israel and Monotheism: The Unfinished Agenda," *Canon, Theology, and Old Testament Interpretation*, ed. by G. M. Tucker, D. L. Petersen, and R. R. Wilson, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988, pp. 92-107.

<sup>4</sup> This is particularly clear in Psalm 82 of which only one sentence is quoted above. According to this Psalm, the gods are accused of injustice before Yahweh as judge (v. 2), are subjected to the verdict of total incompetence (v. 5), and are consequently sentenced to death (v. 7). It is difficult to picture a more radical statement than this on the superiority of Yahweh over the gods.



quently stated that the Old Testament reflects an ongoing process of internal purification with regard to the idea of God culminating in the oracle of the second Isaiah: "I am God and there is no other" (Is. 45:22). Henceforth, so it was repeated over and over again, a theoretical monotheism was established which was inherited by the Judaism of the Hellenistic age and which was an uncontested Jewish belief at the time of the New Testament which all New Testament authors shared as a matter of course. Time does not permit me to show cause why this assertion is, in my opinion, erroneous, both with regard to Deutero-Isaiah and to Hellenistic Judaism.<sup>5</sup> But I claim, moreover, that it is untenable for the New Testament itself and this affirmation requires at least one illustration.

In 1 Cor. 8 Paul has, in answer to questions put to him by the Corinthian congregation, discussed the subject of food offered to idols. In the course of the discussion, he refers to three sentences which were apparently contained in the Corinthians' enquiry of Paul, all of which are affirmations which seem to indicate a dogma to some group in Corinth. The first says: "all of us possess knowledge" (8:1); the second states: "No idol in the world really exists;" and the third avers: "there is no God but one" (8:4). The three affirmations are interdependent: the Corinthians claim enlightenment with a knowledge which has elevated them beyond the sorry superstitious belief in idols in the recognition that there is only one God. It is most remarkable to see that Paul contradicts all three Corinthian dogmas. He claims first that intellectual enlightenment is not the kind of knowledge which corresponds to faith: "Anyone who claims to know something does not yet know as one ought to know" (8:2). From that it follows that the deduction of the non-existence of idols from the premise of a general monotheistic theory is also invalid. So Paul states his counter-thesis against the Corinthians: "indeed there are many gods and many lords" (8:5). Certainly, the verse is continued by the sentence: "For us there is one God, the Father . . . and one Lord Jesus Christ" (8:6), but the force of Paul's "for us" must not be eliminated, nor can it be overlooked that the combination of "one God, the Father" with

<sup>5</sup> Sentences in Deutero-Isaiah like "I am God, and there is no other" (Isa 45:22) or "I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like me" (46:9) are expressed with three different particles of negation which serve the same purpose. The identical words of negation are applied to the nations ("all the nations are as nothing before him" [40:17]), to princes and rulers (God "brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing" [40:23]), and to armies waging war against Israel ("those who war against you shall be as nothing at all" [41:12]). Obviously, with regard to nations, their rulers, and their wars, Deutero-Isaiah does not mean to deny their existence and reality. They become confronted with Yahweh's arrival in the world as king (52:7) and in this event their ultimate impotence is disclosed. The same is true of the gods.

"one Lord Jesus Christ" is most uncomfortable for a clean monotheism. It means that those who have committed themselves to the *One* who died and rose for them have, in this very commitment, bound themselves to the exclusive dominion of the Father of Jesus Christ who is for them the only truly divine power. The theoretical assumption of an abstract monotheism cannot render powerless the reality of many lords and gods in the world. The one God in whom Christians believe and whom they serve, is still engaged in a struggle against other lords and gods which are reduced to impotence only when the incomparable power of the one God takes possession of the believer through the singular event of the death and resurrection of the one incomparable man.

We have no chance to understand the peculiar position of this incomparable God in the midst of other divine powers unless we become sympathetically aware of the possibilities of polytheism. Although difficult to imagine today, polytheism is not a naive and backward condition that belongs to the childhood of humanity. Rather it is an abiding and powerful possibility of understanding the world which is in reality as present among us today as it ever has been. In order to illustrate, I choose one of the most noble and significant forms of life expressing polytheism, the life of the Roman priest of Jupiter, the *flamen dialis*.<sup>6</sup>

The entire life of the Jupiter priest was regulated in such a way that it became the incarnation of a human existence wholly dedicated to an ongoing celebration of holiness. The *flamen dialis* was not allowed to work; he was not even permitted to see other people at work. He was permanently preceded by heralds who were sent ahead of him to announce his coming so that all work would cease before his arrival. As his name "*dialis*" indicates—*dialis* being derived from *dies*, the day—he belongs to the sphere of light which is also the sphere of the god, Jupiter, whom he serves. The *flamen dialis* is by meticulous cultic precautions protected against any exposure to the powers of the night, of strife, of war, of the depths of the earth. He must not touch a dead body; he is not even allowed to enter a locality where a grave is found. He is never to touch a sword, and the mere sight of an army is prohibited to him. Dog and beanstalk, which were dedicated in Roman antiquity to the subterranean powers, he has to avoid, not only by

<sup>6</sup> On the *flamen dialis*, see especially Karl Kerényi, *The Religion of the Greeks and Romans*, translated by Chr. Holme, New York: Dutton, 1962, pp. 219-235. The most important ancient authority on the *flamen* is Aulus Gellius in his *Attic Nights*, of which a good translation can be found conveniently in F. C. Grant, *Ancient Roman Religion*, New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957, pp. 30-32.

never touching them, but even by never mentioning their names. The wild and orgiastic realm of Dionysus is strictly separated from his presence: raw meat which was eaten in Dionysus cults is never to be put on his table. Thus the *flamen dialis* had to represent in his life the power of light and the serene and controlled force of reason representing a human counterpart to the nature of Jupiter himself.

At the same time, the marriage of the Jupiter priest was an essential part of his religious function. His wife was called *flaminica*, indicating the couple's participation in the priestly office. The marriage of *flamen dialis* and *flaminica* was celebrated in the most solemn and binding form, namely by the rite of confarreation. A confarreated marriage could under no circumstances be divorced, and every *flamen dialis* had to be the offspring of such a consecrated union. Through the *flamen's* wife, however, an element was introduced into the marriage and thus into the priestly function which stands for a world entirely different from the sphere of Jupiter to which the priest himself is dedicated. The *flaminica* was holy to Juno, and the sphere of Juno is the one of darkness and of the subterranean places. Juno, in particular, had dominion over birth in which life issues forth out of dark depths into the light of day. Jupiter and Juno, as a divine couple, are related to one another like two hemispheres, one representing day and light, reason and clarity, and the other darkness and depth, emotion and birth. In the celestial union of Jupiter and Juno, the two hemispheres are united in an indissoluble bond which draws life for ever and ever from the very tension of powers which it represents. Exactly like them is the indissoluble union of *flamen dialis* and *flaminica* in whose bond night and day, reason and emotion, exalted clarity and warm depth are brought together.

Why then polytheism? Because the world is ruled by many powers and our experience knows no solution to the permanent struggle between them. The depth of reality which the Roman priest of Jupiter and his wife represent, discloses the multitudinous forces whose interplay lends life to the universe. In all of them human life participates, but all of them are higher than the human lot allows. They are, without exception, powers which rule over and in human life. These are the gods of the ancients. They are many because none of them holds absolute sway, but each has its time, its dignity, and its province. It is impious to deny any of them their right and so true religion acknowledges reverently the host of powers within which human life finds habitation. This is the basis of polytheism.

In the midst of these gods, Yahweh appeared and declared that they were powerless nothings. It is naive to suppose that the arrival of the worship of

one God amounted to no more than a time-conditioned passing away of childish, superstitious notions which peopled the transcendent world with so many human-like figures. In reality, the oneness of the Biblical God was and is asserted over against the presence of universal powers whose reality was and is undeniable: the one God asserts himself only as the victor over giants.

#### IV. THE ONENESS OF GOD AND THE TOTALITY OF DEVOTION

The oneness of God in the Old and New Testaments is the revelation of a God who is incomparable to all other divinities. Therefore, the acknowledgement by a human community of this singular God who rules in the midst of many competitors must necessarily enforce the conclusion that this God alone is to be given total allegiance to the exclusion of all other claims. The oneness of God and the totality of devotion expected from his human witnesses are only two sides of one coin. This is put into classic form in Deut. 6:4f: "Hear, o Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might."

We can understand the significance of this total divine claim on Israel more fully if we place it in the context of religious history. Yahweh's demand for radical totality of allegiance is entirely unique in the religious history of ancient Near Eastern peoples. Of course, Canaanite city states had their protector gods, and whole nations venerated one principal national deity. But nowhere outside of Israel does this amount to the prohibition to give other gods their share of sacrifice and respect, coupled with the demand that one single God is worthy to claim all powers of will, intellect, and emotion. The Old Testament disapprovingly reports the fact that Solomon had many wives. This disapproval is not so much based on the aversion to the luxurious and tyrannical life-style of the monarch, as on the fact that Solomon's foreign wives demanded, and received, cultic recognition for their native gods. So it happens that "Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who offered incense and sacrificed to their gods" (1 Kings 11:7f.) What the deuteronomistic historian castigates as a breach of trust with the one God, was at that time merely standard diplomatic procedure. When a princess married abroad, it was taken for granted that she would bring images of her gods to her new country where they would be placed into a sanctuary and accorded official recognition. Among the gods around



Israel's Yahweh there prevailed peaceful co-existence. Only the God of Israel will brook no rival.

It has been pointed out, successfully I believe, that Israel's clinging to its quite intolerant and exclusivistic God expanded in the course of several centuries of history into ever new areas of reality.<sup>7</sup> The beginnings of Yahweh faith in Israel are shrouded in mystery, allowing not many definite historical certainties. But it seems more likely than not that this faith was exclusivistic from its inception and that it covered relatively small sections of life. As faith in Yahweh grew over the centuries, it was confronted with ever new religious, cultural, and political constellations. There was much borrowing from other cultures in the process, including cultic and mythological phenomena, and there was adaptation and transformation in many forms. What is remarkable, however, is the other side of this process: Faith in Yahweh penetrates into more and more territories, it reshapes what it confronts, remolds what it integrates, and that frequently in a fashion that the sole allegiance to Yahweh conquers hitherto quite unexplored lands. Examples of this long, and often seriously contested, process are the ideological acts of disinheriting fertility divinities from their role over an agrarian society in favor of Yahweh's ownership of the land, and—at a later time—the invasion even of the underworld with its divine powers of death and its conquest by Yahweh. In the conquest of these and other segments of life, the faith in the exclusive dominion of Yahweh is on the attack against the predominant cultures of the day. It belongs to the wholeness and totality of devotion to this one God that faith subdues the power of cultures with their mythologies and begets new language translucent to the rule of the one singular God.

A particularly important aspect of this process leads us directly into the New Testament. One of the most important ideas in the Old Testament is contained in the celebration of the kingship of Yahweh. I assume with a number of Old Testament specialists that the ideology of divine kingship was adopted by Israel in the time of the monarchy and in the specific form in which it was found in Canaanite city states.<sup>8</sup> Originally, therefore, the veneration of a god as monarch belongs into a polytheistic cult because it

<sup>7</sup> Werner H. Schmidt, "Die Frage nach der Einheit des Alten Testaments—im Spannungsfeld von Religionsgeschichte und Theologie," *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie*, Band 2, Neukirchener Verlag, 1987, pp. 33-57, esp. pp. 45-58.

<sup>8</sup> The theory of a late origin for the adoption of the ideology of divine kingship in Israel is characteristic of much German scholarship, see especially Werner H. Schmidt, *Königum Gottes in Ugarit und Israel*, 2nd ed., Berlin: Töpelmann, 1966. American Old Testament scholarship tends to assign the origin to a much earlier, pre-monarchic, date.

presupposes the supreme rule of one God over the assembly of many other divinities who constitute the court assembly. In Israel this polytheistic setting was drastically altered, the gods of the assembly were reduced to nameless nothings who could be cited before Yahweh's court on charges of mismanagement, incompetence, and injustice. But in exilic and post-exilic prophecy the faith in Yahweh's kingship began to rise to such heights of hope that the boundaries of exclusiveness give way to universal expectations. When Yahweh will arise and establish his kingship, the oppression of Israel will be defeated, Israel will be restored, and in one form or another, Israel's Yahweh will become the ruler of all nations. A variety of different pictures is employed to describe this change: Jerusalem will become the center of the world and the nations will voluntarily submit to Yahweh's law, the nations will bring their wealth to Zion, Yahweh's *shalom* will bless the entire world, a new heaven and a new earth will replace the ravaged old creation. And in that revolution of peace and blessing it will become reality that God, identical with Yahweh of Israel, will finally become one God. This is how the prophet Zechariah put it: "And the Lord will become king over all the earth: on that day the Lord will be one and his name one" (Zech. 14:9).<sup>9</sup>

It is not contested that, in the accounts of the Synoptic Gospels, the words and the activity of Jesus revolve around the center that the kingship of God has come so close to realization as to demand awareness that the time of the old decaying order is over and the onrush of a new order can no longer be contained. In Jesus' conduct and speech, the prophetic and apocalyptic hopes for Yahweh's takeover of the final dominion are pounding on the doors of the old age so strongly that those doors are already giving way. The restoration of the twelve tribes of Israel is set in motion through its reconstitution in the call and mission of the twelve disciples. The expansion of the worship of Israel's Yahweh to all nations is narrated, albeit with different means, by all Synoptics, and in this worldwide expansion Yahweh is becoming the one God of the one world. The *shalom* of God's healing dominion is gleaming through the cracks of a dying aeon in the narratives of Jesus' exorcisms, his healings, and his command over nature. The teaching in parables and the instructions on the law announce the dawn of a time in which God is king. In these teachings the conditions and attitudes of the world of death are displaced and opposed by a word spoken in the authority and in the place

<sup>9</sup> An excellent summary of the post-exilic formulations of the idea of Yahweh's kingship is provided by H. Merkley, "Die Einzigkeit Gottes als die sachliche Grundlage der Botschaft Jesu," *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie*, Band 2, Neukirchener Verlag, 1987, pp. 13-32, esp. pp. 14-19.

of God. And last, but of course not least, the total and uncompromising devotion of the herald and agent of God's coming kingship is narrated in the passion stories; and the resurrection accounts, far from being an appendix to this life, tear the veil of history asunder to disclose the truth which was in Jesus' word and deed: the death of death and the birth of eternal life under the royal rule of the one God of life.

# The Ecological Crisis and the Doctrine of Creation

by DANIEL L. MIGLIORE

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THE BIBLE proclaims good news in its very first verse: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). The creation of the world is the first of the majestic and gracious acts of the triune God. It is God's calling "into existence the things that do not exist" (Rom. 4:17). While the good news of God's free grace has its center in the liberating and reconciling work of Jesus Christ and will have its final and victorious realization when God "makes all things new" (Rev. 21:5), the sovereign goodness of God is already at work in the act of creation. The triune God who eternally dwells in loving community also welcomes into existence a world of creatures different from God. The creation of the world, its reconciliation in Jesus Christ, and its promised renewal and consummation are all acts of the one triune God, and they all exhibit the astonishing generosity and beneficence of this God.

## CHRISTIAN FAITH AND THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

Although the doctrine of creation has always had a place in Christian theology, primary if not exclusive attention has been given to the creation of the human species. That there were other beings created by God was certainly acknowledged, but they were often treated, as Alan Lewis notes, more like stage props than like important participants in the drama of salvation whose central protagonists were God and humanity.<sup>1</sup>

However, a shift in emphasis in the doctrine of creation has occurred in recent decades as both church and society have begun to awaken to the worldwide ecological crisis. In the view of some experts, the damage to the environment is already severe and in some cases probably irreversible. Hardly a day goes by without a report of a Bhopal, a Three Mile Island, a Chernobyl, or of new oil spills, leaking chemical dump sites, ominous increases in rain acidity, and the reckless pollution of streams, fields, and forests. The scope and gravity of the ecological crisis give new urgency to the

<sup>1</sup> Lewis, *Theatre of the Gospel* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1984).

task of rethinking the Christian doctrine of creation. Any neglect, marginalization, or distortion of the doctrine of creation in our time would only contribute to impending disaster. Development of a strong and comprehensive theology of the first article of the Apostles' Creed, in which the church confesses its faith in God as "Maker of heaven and earth," must be a major part of every Christian theology today.

We have to recognize at once, however, that critics of the Christian tradition see matters very differently. They contend that the real source of the rapacious attitudes toward the natural environment characteristic of the modern era is to be found precisely in the Christian tradition and its scriptures. In the view of these critics, the teaching that human beings alone are created in the image of God and are commanded by God to exercise "dominion" over all the other creatures has given Western civilization religious justification for treating the natural environment in a ruthless and brutal manner. All of our wanton destruction of nature is sanctioned in the name of fulfilling the divine command. Thus historian Lynn White, Jr., concludes that Christianity bears a "huge burden of guilt" for our present ecological crisis.<sup>2</sup>

It would be a mistake to react in a purely defensive way to this criticism of the Christian theological tradition. As numerous studies have shown, negative and domineering attitudes toward the body and the physical world are present in many strands of Christian theology and even in the Bible itself.<sup>3</sup> Feminist theologians have underscored the link between the hierarchy of male over female and that of humanity over nature.<sup>4</sup> Such attitudes have offered little theological resistance to the spirit of conquest that has characterized the relationship of humanity to the natural environment in Western history. Torn out of its biblical context, the divine command to humanity to "have dominion" over the earth (Gen. 1:26) has been twisted into an ideology of mastery. There is, therefore, ample reason for Christians to repent of their complicity in the abuse of the environment and for Christian theology to engage in serious self-criticism.

Nevertheless, White's argument is based on a caricature of biblical teaching and the classical Christian doctrine of creation. We can identify elements of the biblical witness that are strongly supportive of an ecological theology.

<sup>2</sup> White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-7.

<sup>3</sup> See H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> See Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983).



The Bible presents the nonhuman creatures as the inseparable companions of humanity in creation, reconciliation, and redemption. According to the first creation narrative in Genesis, God declares "very good" all that has been made (Gen. 1:31). When the narrative states that human beings are created in the image of God and are given the command to have dominion over the earth, this must be understood in the context of the distinctive identification of God—not only in this passage but throughout the Bible—as the God not of arbitrary power but of free grace and covenantal love.

While it is undeniable that there are passages of the Bible, particularly of the Old Testament, where God is described as exercising fierce suzerainty over the nations and nature, calling for acts of vengeance and even slaughter of the innocents (e.g., 1 Sam. 15:3), Christian faith does not find in such passages the central clue to the power and purpose of God. Certainly the reign of God proclaimed by Jesus and enacted in his life and death turns upside down every view of sovereignty as mastery over others: "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all" (Mark 10:42-44). Seen in the light of what Christians hold to be the central biblical message, the command of God to humanity to have dominion calls for respect, love, and care for the good creation. It is a summons to wise stewardship rather than selfish indulgence, to leadership within the commonwealth of creatures rather than a license for exploitation. We might paraphrase the divine command to humanity as follows: "Let your faithful ordering of the world image the way in which the gracious God exercises dominion." According to the witness of Scripture at its deepest level, therefore, there is no absolute right of humanity over nature; on the contrary, human beings are entrusted with its care and protection.<sup>5</sup>

That God values and takes delight in all creatures is highlighted in the biblical assertion that not just humans but all creatures are able in some way to give glory to God their creator. "The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). While the stars, the trees, and the animals do not speak or sing of the glory of God in the same way that humans do, in their own way they too lift up their praises to God, and for all we know, they do this with a spontaneity and consistency far greater than our own. The book of Job describes strange and wondrous

<sup>5</sup> The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Brief Statement of Faith speaks of planet earth as "entrusted to our care" by God the Creator (l. 38).

creatures (Job 39-42) who seem to have no purpose other than to show the fecundity of God's grace. If God takes delight in all the creatures, and if they are all called in their own distinctive way to praise and glorify God, nonhuman creatures cannot be mere ancillary figures in a Christian doctrine of creation.

The Bible not only presents the nonhuman world as part of God's good creation but also views the whole creation as mysteriously entangled in the drama of sin and redemption and included in the hope of God's coming kingdom. Humanity and the other creatures are bound together in suffering and hope. If both experience divine judgment (Gen. 3), both are recipients of the divine promise (Gen. 9).

Under the present conditions of life, humanity and nature are caught in a web of mutual alienation and abuse. The separation of human beings from God insinuates itself into all other relationships, including that between humanity and nature. On the one side, there is brutal human exploitation and destruction of the natural environment; on the other side, there is tragic human suffering at the hands of destructive forces of nature, as such phenomena as cancers, earthquakes, hurricanes, and drought remind us. So the Apostle Paul speaks of the natural world as groaning like a woman in childbirth, even as humanity also groans for its final liberation from suffering and death (Rom. 8:22-23). According to the biblical witness, we human beings exist in a solidarity of life and death with the whole groaning and expectant creation.

This inseparability of humanity and nature in the biblical view extends to their final destiny. The Bible includes the natural world in the promise and hope of redemption. Evidence of this is the divine covenant with Noah, symbolized in the rainbow after the flood (Gen. 9), which explicitly embraces all creatures. There are numerous visions of future redemption in the Bible, and they are staggeringly inclusive. They speak of a transformed, resurrected body (1 Cor. 15), of a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21), of the wolf dwelling in peace with the lamb and children playing with scorpions (Isa. 11), of a time of universal shalom when all creatures will live together in harmonious and joyful community.

If with the biblical witnesses we see ourselves as fellow creatures in company with all the inhabitants of the world of nature, if we understand ourselves as trustees rather than as masters of the earth, if we see nature as entangled with us in the drama of sin and redemption, and if we include nature in our hope for justice, freedom, and peace throughout God's creation, we will no longer want to rationalize our abuse of nature by alleging a

God-given right to rule over the rest of creation as we please. Criticisms of the use of the Bible and Christian doctrine to justify arrogant and exploitative relationships to the world of nature are to be taken seriously; they call for reform of faith and theology. While there is certainly distortion in these criticisms, the summons to a new ecological consciousness in Christian proclamation and practice must not be passed over.

#### THEMES OF THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION

A Christian doctrine of creation must be developed in the light of the revelation of God in Christ, and it must attend to several closely related themes.

1. To speak of the world as God's creation is first of all to make an affirmation about God. By calling God the "creator" and everything that constitutes the world "creatures," Christian faith affirms the *radical otherness, transcendence, and lordship of God*. There is, in other words, an ontological difference between God and the world, creator and creation. According to classical Christian doctrine, God creates *ex nihilo*, "out of nothing." "Nothing" is not primordial stuff out of which the world was created. Creation "out of nothing" means that God alone is the source of all that exists. The creation of the world is an act of sovereign freedom. God is not like the craftsman of Plato's *Timaeus* who imposes form and order on pre-existing matter. Nor is creation an emanation of the divine reality and thus partially divine. For Christian faith God is not a part of the world, and the world is not partly or secretly God. God is creator of all things—"the heavens and the earth"—and that means, as Langdon Gilkey puts it, "the nebulae, the amoebae, the dinosaurs, the early Picts and Scots, the Chinese, the Kremlin, You, I, our two dogs, and the cat."<sup>6</sup> God is the mysterious other on which all that exists radically and totally depends.

But to confess that God is creator is to say more. It is to say that *the free, transcendent God is generous and welcoming*. God was not compelled to create the world. It is an act of free grace. Creation is a gift, a benefit. When we confess God as the creator, we are saying something about the character of God. We are confessing that God is good, that God gives life to others, that God lets others exist alongside and in fellowship with God, that God makes room for others. No outside necessity compelled God to create. Nor did God create because of some inner deficiency in the divine life that had to be satisfied. If creation is a necessity in either of these meanings, it is not grace.

In another sense, however, creation may be called "necessary"—that is,

<sup>6</sup> Gilkey, *Message and Existence: An Introduction to Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), p. 87.



in the sense that God creates in total consistency with God's nature. Creation fittingly expresses the true character of God, who is love. Creation is not an arbitrary act, something God just decided to do on a whim, as it were. On the contrary, God is true and faithful to God's own nature in the act of creation. To speak of God as the creator is to speak of a beneficent, generous God, whose love and will-to-community are freely, consistently, and fittingly displayed in the act of creation. The grace of God did not first become active in the calling of Abraham or in the sending of Jesus. In the act of creation, God already manifests the self-communicating, other-affirming, community-forming love that defines God's eternal triune reality and that is decisively disclosed in the ministry and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. God is love, and this eternal love of the triune God constitutes, in Jonathan Edwards' words, a "disposition to abundant communication."<sup>7</sup> Already in God's own trinitarian life of shared love, God aims at the coming into being of created community.<sup>8</sup> God is eternally disposed to create, to give and share life with others. The welcome to others that is rooted in the triune life of God spills over, so to speak, in the act of creation.

God's work of creation is not only aptly described as grace but also, in a sense, as "costly grace." It is an act of divine *kenosis*. Although the metaphor of divine kenosis is usually restricted to the "emptying" or self-humbling of the Son of God for our salvation (Phil. 2:5-6), there is a sense in which the act of creation is already a kind of divine kenosis—a self-humiliation or self-limitation—that others may have life, may have a relatively independent existence alongside God. As Emil Brunner writes, "The kenosis, which reaches its [highest] expression in the cross of Christ, began with the creation of the world."<sup>9</sup>

2. The doctrine of creation is at once an affirmation about God and an affirmation about the world and ourselves. So a second theme of this doctrine is that *the world as a whole and all beings individually are radically dependent on God*. Such radical dependence is far more than a sense of partial dependence on God in some regions of our experience or at some especially difficult moments of our life. In confessing that God is creator and that we are creatures, we acknowledge that we are finite, contingent, radically dependent beings. We express our awareness that we might not have been,

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The End for Which God Created the World*, chap. 1, sec. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1983), p. 384.

<sup>9</sup> Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1952), p. 20. See also John Polkinghorne, *Science and Creation: The Search for Understanding* (Boston: New Science Library, 1988), pp. 62-63.

that our very existence and every moment of our experience is a gift received from a source beyond ourselves.

The realization of this radical contingency, of our awareness of being primarily recipients of life, is what some philosophers and theologians have called the "shock of nonbeing." You and I are not necessary. We are creatures who exist at the pleasure of our creator. As contingent beings, our existence is precarious, and we are frequently reminded of this by sickness and failure and anxiety and the death of loved ones, and even by the positive experiences of joy, happiness, contentment—all of which come and go so quickly. Experiencing a moment of intense beauty that we would like to possess forever, feeling impotent in the face of injustice, witnessing the birth of a child, or being present at the funeral of a child—all this and so much more is taken up into our confession of our creatureliness. Our hold on life is fragile. Like the grass that withers and dies (Isa. 40:6), we live on the edge of nonbeing. We did not bring ourselves into existence, and we cannot guarantee our continued existence. Friedrich Schleiermacher described the universal feeling of "absolute dependence" on God, and Rudolf Otto spoke of our "creature feeling." This is not simply about an event in the distant past called the creation of the world. It is a sense of being dependent here and now, always and everywhere, on the creative power of God. "Know that the Lord is God! It is God that has made us and not we ourselves" (Ps. 100:3).

This sense of being radically dependent on God for our very existence is closely related to the Christian awareness of salvation in Christ by grace alone. We are created and justified by grace alone. As creatures and as forgiven sinners, we are recipients of grace. In neither case is it a status that we have achieved through our own doing. Luther summarizes this faith awareness in his remark that "we are all beggars"; Calvin expresses the same conviction in the words "we are not our own, we belong to God."<sup>10</sup> It is, then, no coincidence that the Apostle Paul brings together faith in the God who raises the dead (our dependence on God for future life), faith in God who justifies sinners (our dependence on God for present life), and faith in God who brings into existence things which were not (our dependence on God for the creation and preservation of life) (cf. Rom. 4:17; 5:1). We are utterly dependent on God for the gift of life, for new life, and for the final fulfillment of life. This is what we confess when we call God our creator.

Radical dependence on God as a theme of the doctrine of creation must

<sup>10</sup> Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.7.1.

be properly interpreted, especially today when it is charged that Christian theology has often inculcated a spirit of passivity and servile dependence. The God on whom we are radically dependent is the God who wills us to be free. Reliance on the God of the gospel is radical liberation from all servile dependencies. Thus, far from being a theological put-down, the doctrine of creation is the magna charta of human freedom. God our creator, the triune God, is the graciously liberating God who wills community in freedom.

3. A third theme of the doctrine of creation is that *in all of its contingency, finitude, and limitation, creation is good* (although not "perfect"). If God is good, then for all its limitations and precariousness the gift of life which God gives is good. This is emphasized in the Genesis creation narrative where the refrain is repeated: "And God saw that it was good" (Gen. 1:10, 18, 21, 25, 31).

The biblical affirmation that creation is good is easily turned into an ideology that obscures the brokenness of life and the reality of evil. This happens when this article of faith is separated from other faith affirmations about the actual fallenness of the world God has created—about sin, the work of reconciliation, and the hope in God's final victory over all those forces in the world that deform and distort God's good creation. When spoken casually and carelessly, the claim that God's creation is good can become an outrageous and even blasphemous assertion that every present state of affairs is good or that everything that happens is good. Hence what Christian theology does and does not say in affirming the goodness of creation must be briefly noted.

a. To say that creation is good is to reject every metaphysical dualism, to deny that some aspect or sphere of what God has created is inherently evil. Dualism in some form or other has insinuated itself into the theology and life of the church from its beginnings to the present. Consider some of the forms it has taken and continues to take: the spiritual is good, the physical is evil; the intellectual is good, the sexual is evil; the masculine is good, the feminine is evil; white is good, black is evil; human beings are good, the natural environment is evil. Over against all such dualisms, Christian faith declares that all that God has created is good. To regard any part of the creation as inherently evil—the Manichean heresy—is both slanderous and destructive.

b. Saying that creation is good is very different from saying that the world around us is useful to satisfy whatever purposes we have in mind. It is to say that God values all creatures whether or not we consider them useful.

The affirmation that creation is good is the ground of respect and admiration for all beings. Not only humans but the animals—including the strange and frightening animals (cf. Job 39-41)—are God's creatures and deserve our respect. The inanimate as well as the animate world is God's creation and has its place within God's purposes and as such is to be honored. As already noted, human beings have no God-given right to exploit or deface or destroy the creation. The arrogant assumption of so much of our modern technocratic way of life—namely, that God loves only human beings (and usually only a fraction of them)—is an anthropocentric distortion of the Christian doctrine of creation.

c. To say that the world as created by God is good is not to say that it is "perfect" in some pollyannaish sense. The Bible is not especially interested in a past golden age when there was no need to struggle, no experience of suffering, and no death whatever. If all creatures are finite, limited, and vulnerable and if challenge, risk, and growth are part of creaturely existence as intended by God, then there is no reason to suppose that *all forms* of suffering are inherently evil. There is, as Karl Barth puts it, a "shadow side" of the good creation.

d. To say that creation is good is not to deny that the world, as we know and experience it, is "fallen" and in need of redemption. There is much in the world that should *not* be. While creaturely existence entails finitude and limitations, the powers of disease, destruction, and oppression are not part of the creator's intention. God is not the cause but the opponent of evil forces in their individual and corporate expressions. When faith speaks of the goodness of creation, it refers not simply to the value of the reality brought into being at the beginning but also to the additional value this reality is given by virtue of God's continuing and costly love for it. The value of human life is determined not simply by the dignity the creator originally gave it but also by what divine love can do with it and intends for it. Thus Christian affirmation of the "good creation" encompasses the entire history of God's relation to the world from its beginning to its final consummation.

4. A fourth theme of the doctrine of creation is *the coexistence and interdependence of all created beings*. Luther is surely right in saying that one meaning of speaking of God as creator of heaven and earth is that "God has created me." And yet clearly God has created more than me. So Luther correctly goes on to say, "God has created me and all that exists."<sup>1</sup> In other words, creaturehood means radical coexistence, mutual interdependence,

<sup>1</sup> Luther, "The Small Catechism," 2.2, in *The Book of Concord*, ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 345.



rather than solitary or monarchic existence. The creation of human beings with each other and with other creatures is an unmistakable theme of the Genesis creation stories. For all their differences, both narratives of creation in Genesis portray human beings as standing in organic relation to each other and to the world of nature.<sup>12</sup> Yahweh sets humanity in a garden and declares that "it is not good that the *adam* (human creature) should be alone" (Gen. 2:18).

Karl Barth speaks of coexistence as the "basic form" of humanity, by which he means that we are human only in relation to God and to each other. Barth also contends that our essential relationality, or existence-in-coexistence, extends beyond the circle of human life. Human beings exist with the animals, with the soil, sun, and water and all the forms of life that they produce.<sup>13</sup> God is creator of a world whose inhabitants are profoundly interdependent. The world was created by God not as an assemblage of solitary units but for life together, and its structure of existence-in-community reflects God's own eternal life in triune community.

5. A fifth theme of the doctrine of creation is that *God the creator is purposive, and the world that has been created is dynamic and purposeful*. God continues to act as creator and preserver. To limit the work of God the creator to a single moment of the past would be, as Calvin said, "cold and barren."<sup>14</sup> The creative activity of God continues and has a goal. To be sure, this purposive activity of the creator and the purposefulness of the world cannot be directly "read off" what we perceive and experience. It is an affirmation of faith, not an empirical observation. There are clearly elements both of order and disorder, rationality and indeterminacy, cosmos and chaos in the world known to modern science. While the world described by scientific investigation is open to a faith interpretation, the evidence does not require that it be interpreted in this way.

Yet if we take as our central clue God's way with the people of Israel and the decisive confirmation of that way in Jesus Christ, we are led to confess that creation has a purpose. God creates not by accident nor by caprice, but by and for the Word of God. According to Scripture, Jesus Christ is the Word who was with God in the beginning and through whom all things were created (John 1:1-3; Heb. 11:3). He is the goal toward which the whole creation moves, and it is this divine goal that makes of the world a cosmos rather than a chaos. In Christ "all things hold together" (Col. 1:17). The

<sup>12</sup> See George S. Hendry, "On Being a Creature," *Theology Today* 33 (April 1981): 64.

<sup>13</sup> See Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/1.

<sup>14</sup> Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.16.1.

purpose for which God created the world is decisively disclosed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. With God the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Word of God is present and active in the creation, redemption, and consummation of the world.

In a trinitarian theology of creation, the Spirit of God, like the eternal Word, is at work in the world from its beginning, moving over the primeval waters (Gen. 1:2), giving life and breath to creatures (Ps. 104:30). The creative and re-creative Spirit of God continues to act everywhere, extending justice, building and restoring community, renewing all things. The Spirit acts freely, like the wind (John 3:8). Believers, however, recognize the Spirit mainly as the transforming power who comes from the Father and the Son and who liberates people for participation in the divine re-creative activity. Led by the Spirit, we are called to be God's partners—God's co-workers (cf. 1 Cor. 3:9)—in conducting creation to its appointed goal, called the reign of God.

The promised goal of redeemed creation is described in the New Testament as a time of freedom, peace, and festivity. This messianic time of peace and festivity is prefigured in the sabbath rest that completes God's creative activity. Just as the first story of creation in Genesis moves toward its goal in the sabbath rest and enjoyment of the creator, so the history of the new creation finds its goal in the celebration and festivity of perfectly realized and fully enjoyed fellowship with God and other creatures in the new heaven and new earth. According to Jürgen Moltmann, "Israel has given the nations two archetypal images of liberation: the exodus and the sabbath."<sup>15</sup> The goal of the liberation of creation is both "external" freedom from bondage and "internal" freedom for the peace and joy of life in community with God and other creatures.

When the creation of the world by God is set in the context of the whole activity of the triune God, we are able to describe creation not as something past and finished but as still open to the future. And the future for which creation is open is not only the coming of Christ to renew the creation but the participation of the creation in the end-time glory of God. Moltmann makes this point with a helpful revision of a medieval theological axiom. According to the scholastic theologians, "Grace does not destroy, but presupposes and perfects nature"; according to Moltmann, "Grace neither destroys nor perfects, but prepares nature for eternal glory."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 287.

<sup>16</sup> Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 8.

## MODELS OF CREATION

The major possibilities of understanding the relationship between God and the world are often said to be theism, pantheism, and panentheism. Theism is the belief that God is the transcendent creator of the world, pantheism is the belief that the world is a mode of God's being, and panentheism is the belief that the world and God are mutually dependent. Since none of these positions, as stated, is entirely adequate to a trinitarian doctrine of God and creation, a different inventory of models and metaphors for understanding this relationship is desirable. While the creation of the world is a unique act, there is no reason why we should not expect *analogies* to this event in our own experience. We must remember, of course, that all analogies, metaphors, and models are imperfect when they are employed with reference to the divine life and activity. They never exhaust what we are seeking to understand. As Sallie McFague reminds us, our language about God is inescapably metaphorical, and a metaphor says both that "it is, and it is not."<sup>17</sup>

George Hendry identifies several models or analogies used in Christian theology to speak of the divine act of creation. Each would claim some biblical support, and each has roots in common human experience.<sup>18</sup>

1. One obvious analogy is *generation*. We speak of procreation with reference to the human act of giving life to another. There are some hints of this analogy in the Bible. God is described as being like a "father" or "mother" to Israel. Yet while the procreational metaphor is present in the Bible, it is remarkably subdued by comparison with other religions of the ancient Near East. When the prophets of Israel, and later Jesus, speak of God as "father" or "mother," the metaphor points not primarily to an act of sexual procreation but to God's creative love and parental care.

2. Another analogy of creation is *fabrication* or *formation*. The idea of fabrication is evident in the depiction of God as a builder (Ps. 127:1), and the idea of formation is evident in the depiction of God as a potter who forms clay into vessels (Jer. 18; Rom. 9:21) and when God is said to have formed human beings from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7). These analogies of fabrication and formation underscore the intentionality and purposefulness of God the Creator, but they have two distinct disadvantages. They both presuppose a given material that is worked upon (thus obscuring

<sup>17</sup> McFague, *Metaphorical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> See George S. Hendry, *Theology of Nature* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), pp. 147-62. See also Ian Barbour, *Religion in an Age of Science*, vol. 1 (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), pp. 176ff.

the radicality of God's creation of the world "out of nothing"), and they both assign a subpersonal status to what God brings into being.

3. Still a third analogy is that of *emanation*, which means literally a "sending out," in the sense of water flowing from a spring, or light and heat radiating from the sun or a fire. According to this analogy, creation is an overflowing of God's fullness; it has its origin in the richness and abundance of deity. Earlier in this chapter I myself made some use of this imagery. However, the metaphor of emanation can suggest an impersonal and even involuntary process. Hendry points out that while the analogy of emanation is used in classical theology with reference to the intertrinitarian relations—"light from light" in the Nicene Creed, for example—it did not gain wide acceptance as an analogy for God's creation of the world.

4. An analogy widely discussed today but not mentioned by Hendry is the *mind/body* relationship. In an effort to provide an alternative to oppressive hierarchical models, some theologians have proposed that the world be described as the body of God. They argue that this analogy best expresses the intimacy and reciprocity of the relationship between God and the world.<sup>19</sup> The problem with this analogy, of course, is that it is incapable of articulating the gracious, nonnecessary, asymmetrical relationship of God to the world described in the Bible.

5. Finally, there is the analogy of what Hendry calls *artistic expression*, or what might also be called *play*. We often speak of the creation as a "work" of God. That way of speaking has its place, but it may connote something routine and mostly unpleasant, which is unfortunately the way work is often experienced in human life. It may be more helpful, therefore, to think of the creation of the world as the "play" of God, as a kind of free artistic expression whose origin must be sought ultimately in God's good pleasure.

According to the Bible, the creation is brought into being by the Word and Spirit of God. God speaks and the world is given existence (Gen. 1). The Spirit of God moves over the primordial chaos (Gen. 1:2) and gives life to all creatures (Ps. 104:30). This divine creative activity occurs freely and spontaneously and thus displays features of play and artistic expression.

What are some of these features? First, true play is always free and uncoerced activity. All artistic expression—whether in music, drama, dance, painting, or sculpture—is creative, free, expressive, playful. While such playful activity has its own rules, they are not experienced as arbitrary but as defining a particular field of freedom. Second, there is free self-limitation

<sup>19</sup> See Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).



in all artistic activity. Artists must respect the integrity of the medium with which they work, and for this reason some voluntary self-limitation is required. Third, when artists express themselves, they bring forth something really different from themselves yet with their own image stamped upon it. And these artistic creations often acquire a life of their own. A classic piece of music or a classic literary text "speaks for itself." The characters of a novel or a drama acquire a personality and profile of their own and cannot be made to say or do just anything without the appearance of authorial violence or artificiality. Artistic creations are born in freedom, and they acquire a certain independence from their creators. Finally, while the artist needs certain materials, the result of artistic activity is of a different order from the materials used. A Mozart concerto or a Rembrandt painting is not simply a reassemblage of given materials but a "new creation."

The model of creation as artistic expression seems particularly appropriate for a trinitarian theology. The idea of God as an uninvolved and distant creator (a typical characterization in the Western philosophical tradition) is totally inadequate from a biblical perspective. On the other hand, the newly revived panentheistic description of the world as God's body, while emphasizing the intimacy of the relationship between God and the world, fails to depict appropriately either the freedom of God in relation to the world or the real otherness and freedom of the world. The model of artistic expression is attractive because it combines the elements of creative freedom and intimacy of relation between artist and artistic creation. Just as the love of God is freely expressed and shared in intertrinitarian community, so in the act of creation God brings forth in love a world of free creatures that bear the mark of the divine creativity.

Our failure to explore the metaphor of artistic activity or play in the doctrine of creation may be due in part to an unfortunate cleavage between theology and the arts in the modern period. And in part, as Moltmann suggests, it may be due to theology's regrettable disregard of the significance of the sabbath day of rest in the first creation narrative in Genesis. God's creativity comes to its conclusion in this story not in the making of humanity but in the rest, celebration, and festivity of the sabbath. As the completion and crown of creation, the sabbath is a reminder of the playful dimension of the divine creativity and a foretaste of the joy, freedom, and peace for which the world was created.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Moltmann, *God in Creation*, pp. 5-7, 276-96, 310-12.

## THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION AND MODERN SCIENCE

The preceding exposition should have made it clear that the Christian doctrine of creation is not a quasiscientific theory about how the world came into being. It is a deeply religious affirmation, shaped by the experience of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. It gives expression to our faith awareness that we are contingent, finite beings whose very existence is a gift from God. The stories of Genesis 1 and 2 are not scientific descriptions competing with modern cosmological theories but rather poetic, doxological declarations of faith in God, who has created and reconciled the world and each one of us.

In discussions of the relation between faith in God the creator and modern science, several principles should be recognized. First, we should note that science and theology employ two very distinct languages, are two different "language games" (Wittgenstein). On the one hand, there is the language that speaks of data, empirical evidence, causal connections, and probable theories; on the other hand, there is the language that speaks in rich symbols, images, and poetic cadences. To try to equate the scientific description of the origin of the world with the symbolic and metaphorical affirmations of biblical faith and theology is, as Karl Barth once put it, like trying to compare the sound of a vacuum cleaner with that of an organ. The language of science and the language of faith must be recognized in their distinctiveness rather than collapsing one into the other. The claim that only one of these languages is the voice of truth is simply unfounded and arrogant.

But we must go on to say, secondly, that the two languages of science and theology are not totally different or mutually exclusive.<sup>21</sup> They certainly need not be at war with each other. Of course, if the Bible asserted to be an infallible textbook of natural science, that is the equivalent of a declaration of war on science by faith. And conversely, if evolutionary theory is coupled with explicit atheism, that is the equivalent of a declaration of war on faith by science. There have indeed been several centuries of warfare between science and theology. When Galileo was forced to renounce his scientific judgment that the earth moves, his case became a symbol of the enmity between science and faith. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the conflict focused on the theory of evolution. The Wilberforce-Huxley debate, the Scopes trial, and recent arguments for "creation science" remind

<sup>21</sup> Ian Barbour insists that "we cannot remain content with a plurality of unrelated languages if they are languages about the same world" (*Religion in an Age of Science*, p. 16).

us of how widespread the confusion has been and continues to be on both sides about the relationship of science and faith.

Despite the confusion, there is nothing inherently inconsistent in holding both to evolutionary theory and to faith in God the creator. However extensively we may have to revise our previous assumptions about the time span, stages, and processes of God's creative activity, this does not substantively affect the central claim of faith in God the creator. If some defenders of evolutionary theory think that faith is disproved by modern science, their conclusions are no more warranted by the theory itself than "creation science" is a required or even appropriate conclusion to be drawn from faith's affirmation of the creation of the world by God. Both reductionism in science and imperialism in theology must be avoided. There are multiple levels in the world of our experience (physical, chemical, biological, personal, social, moral, religious), and each level is intelligible on its own terms as well as open to new understanding at a higher level.<sup>22</sup> This means that we can explore the congruence of scientific and theological understandings of the world without insisting on a proof or disproof of the one by the other.

Third, there is growing consensus among many theologians and scientists that science and faith not only need not be at war with each other but that they can and should influence and enrich each other. Scientists increasingly recognize the dimension of personal participation and creative imagination in scientific inquiry.<sup>23</sup> They also emphasize that the scientific enterprise itself rests on assumptions and root metaphors that cannot be strictly proved. Stanley L. Jaki argues persuasively that assumptions which make modern science possible—that observed entities are objectively real, that they possess an inherent rationality, that they are contingent, and that the universe is a coherent whole—are entirely congruent with the Christian doctrine of creation.<sup>24</sup> A philosopher of science remarks that today it is not only the case that theology seeks understanding, but that scientific understanding is in search of faith.<sup>25</sup>

On the other side of the coin, Christian faith and theology have much to learn from modern biological research and scientific cosmology: that God has indeed created a dynamic and open rather than a static and closed universe; that God has created a highly differentiated rather than a monolithic

<sup>22</sup> On levels of cognitional activity, see Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (London: Longmans, Green, 1957), pp. 271-78.

<sup>23</sup> See Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

<sup>24</sup> Jaki, *Cosmos and Creator* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1980).

<sup>25</sup> Polkinghorne, *Science and Creation*, p. 32.

universe; and that God has created a universe in which there is change, novelty, and indeterminacy as well as continuity, order, and coherence.<sup>26</sup> The pendulum may even have begun to swing too far in the opposite direction of expecting science to make clear what faith and theology only dimly intuit. This is at least the case in some popular writings which argue that quantum physics and the Big-Bang cosmology offer a surer path to God than faith. Careless claims of this sort will not advance the conversation between modern science and theology.

What will assist progress is a new openness on both sides: of science to the dimension of mystery in its own work, and of faith and theology to a vision of God's purposeful activity that transcends the narrow framework of anthropocentrism. Theological anthropocentrism must be overcome by a new theocentrism and by a doctrine of creation that is not fixated on the past but oriented to a future consummation embracing the whole creation of God. This does not mean a devaluation of human life but a revaluation of all creation. As Jürgen Moltmann writes, "The enduring meaning of human existence lies in its participation in [the] joyful paean of God's creation. This song of praise was sung *before* the appearance of human beings, is sung *outside* the sphere of human beings, and will be sung even *after* human beings have—perhaps—disappeared from this planet."<sup>27</sup>

In view of the ecological crisis that we face today, it is imperative that we put the old warfare between Christian faith and science behind us. A natural theology, at least of the traditional sort, is not what is needed or desired. But a theology of nature is of crucial importance.<sup>28</sup> It is time to move beyond a policy of total separation or mutual indifference between scientists and their discoveries on the one hand and the theologians and the vision of faith on the other. It is imperative that scientists and theologians talk and work together toward a new understanding of the complex and fragile beauty of the interrelated world created by God.

<sup>26</sup> See A. R. Peacocke, *Creation and the World of Science* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

<sup>27</sup> Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 197.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Barbour, *Religion in an Age of Science*, p. 183.



# From Origenism to Pelagianism: Elusive Issues in an Ancient Debate

by ELIZABETH A. CLARK

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## I. THE ISSUES

I DOUBT that at any time before or after the first three decades of the fifth century were a group of celibate men so concerned with babies. Whether "babies-in-theory," or flesh-and-blood babies, is difficult to judge: the passion with which they detail the sufferings and death of infants, their shrieks and wails upon receiving the baptismal waters, might suggest the latter.<sup>1</sup> How and why did babies capture the theological imagination of a generation? Because, I think, in this *topos* lay the point of greatest tension for those simultaneously attempting to champion human freedom that allowed the assignment of praise and blame, to answer the thorny question of the soul's origin, and to uphold both the goodness and the power of God. The signal importance of these issues finds its greatest urgency in the question of the suffering of children: theodicy here meets its hardest test.

The issue of God's justice, with its concomitant questions, had been left in a vacuum with the condemnation of Origen's cosmic scheme that was the result of the Origenist controversy. Writing in the third century, Origen had provided a coherent framework in which questions of the origin of the soul, human free will, and God's justice and goodness could be discussed. Although the major participants of the Pelagian controversy—Augustine, for example—had only partial knowledge of Origen's writings,<sup>2</sup> the larger is-

The following abbreviations are used in the notes of this article: CCL (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina); CSEL (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum); GCS (Die Griechische Christliche Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte); PL (Patrologia Latina); PLS (Patrologia Latina Supplementum); SC (Sources Chrétiennes); TU (Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der alchristlichen Literatur).

<sup>1</sup> Augustine, *Contra Julianum* IV, 8, 42 (PL 44, 759); cf. *Sermo* 165, 6, 7 (PL 38, 906). For Augustine's early reflections on the bad behavior of babies, see *Confessions* I, 7, 11 (CCL 27, 6).

<sup>2</sup> Robert O'Connell, *The Origin of the Soul in St. Augustine's Writings* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1987), pp. 11, 102, 323-324; Pierre Courcelle, *Les Lettres grecques en occident de Macrobe à Cassiodore* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1948), pp. 185-187. Berthold Altaner, "Augustinus und Origenes: Eine quellenkritische Untersuchung," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 70 (1951), 15-41, has a more generous estimate of Augustine's knowledge of Origen.

sues that he had raised could not be avoided by later theologians even if they rejected his specific answers. The Pelagian controversy, I posit, provided an arena in which Origen's questions were answered in new and different ways.

We should first recall the anti-determinist context of Origen's theologizing. Over against various Gnostics and astral determinists, Origen pressed an interpretation of Scripture and a cosmic scheme that celebrated human freedom. From the preface to *On First Principles* which claims that the church holds as dogma that every rational creature has free will and is not subject to necessity (against the astral determinists),<sup>3</sup> through his anti-astrological polemic in his commentaries on the Old Testament,<sup>4</sup> to his long discussion of astrology preserved in *Philocalia* 23,<sup>5</sup> Origen stands firm against astral determinism. Likewise, he frequently criticized Gnostics (whether rightly or wrongly interpreted) for their implication that God is responsible for the world's injustice and cruelty.<sup>6</sup> To prove that "there is no unrighteousness with God" and that "God is no respecter of persons"<sup>7</sup>—later to be favorite scriptural verses of the Pelagians—Origen explicates the "hard" biblical passages in such a way that he excludes determinist explanations. Thus the divergent fates of Jacob and Esau relate to their merits in a previous existence;<sup>8</sup> "vessels of honor and dishonor" made *themselves* such either in a past or the present life;<sup>9</sup> and Pharaoh's "hardening" (*contra* the Gnostics) results from his own evil, not from his creation as a "lost nature."<sup>10</sup> Yet, Origen asserts, even in the midst of human stubbornness and error, God works to heal, to teach, to bring all back to their original blessed condition: although Pharaoh drowned, he was not destroyed.<sup>11</sup> Since in no case

<sup>3</sup> Origen, *De principiis* I, praefatio, 5 (GCS 22, 12). It is of interest that this paragraph is followed immediately by a topic that Origen claims has *not* been so clearly defined: whether the soul is transmitted through human seed or had some different beginning; whether it was created or not; whether the soul is brought to the body from elsewhere (p. 13).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Origen, *Homilia in Iudicum* II, 3 (GCS 30, 477); *Homilia in Jesu Nave* VII, 4 (SC 71, 4).

<sup>5</sup> Origen, *Philocalia* 23 (SC 226, 130-210), based largely on Origen's (now lost) *Commentary on Genesis*.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. Origen, *Homilia in Jesu Nave* X, 2; XII, 3 (SC 71, 274, 300); *De principiis* III, 1 (9) 8 (GCS 22, 208-209).

<sup>7</sup> Romans 9:14; 2:11, cited in Origen, *De principiis* I, 7, 4 (GCS 22, 90).

<sup>8</sup> Genesis 25: 25-26; Malachi 1: 2-3; Romans 9: 10-13; and Origen, *De principiis* II, 9, 7; III, 1, 22 (20) (GCS 22, 170-171, 238-239); cf. II, 9, 5 (GCS 22, 168-169).

<sup>9</sup> Romans 9: 18-21; see Origen, *De principiis* III, 1, 21 (20); II, 9, 8 (GCS 22, 235-238, 172).

<sup>10</sup> Exodus 7:3; Romans 9:17-18; Origen, *De principiis* III, 1, 7-10 (GCS 22, 204-211).

<sup>11</sup> Origen, *De principiis* III, 1, 14 (13) (GCS 22, 221); cf. *Philocalia* 27, 3-9 (SC 226, 278-300). Cf. *Homilia in Exodum* III, 3 (SC 321, 104, 114): Pharaoh was scourged for his own good; but here, Origen has him "destroyed in the deep abyss."

can the sin of one person compel punishment for another, Exodus 20:5 ("the sins of the parents are visited on their children to the third and fourth generations") cannot be taken literally.<sup>12</sup> The defects and sufferings that humans endure—such as congenital blindness—are to be explained either by their demerits in a previous existence<sup>13</sup> or by the more beneficent theory that some souls of high merit opt to suffer along with others in this life so as to assist the process of salvation.<sup>14</sup>

The "props" that undergirded Origen's argument of divine equity and human freedom were dismantled by the early fifth century. The Origenist notion that rational creatures had preexisted, then "fell" into bodies, and would after numerous ages and many "rises and falls" return to their original blessed unity was vigorously attacked by writers from Methodius to Jerome and Theophilus of Alexandria. That the devil could resume his angelic status and be saved, that bodily substance was destined to pass away, that hellfire is not external to us, but merely the pangs of guilty conscience, were other Origenist hypotheses deemed unorthodox by Augustine's era.<sup>15</sup> An Origenist version of Christianity stood condemned.

Augustine's response was also resoundingly negative: chastising those who imagined that they might escape theological difficulties by positing that souls had pre-existence before they entered bodies, Augustine recoils from the theory of cyclic "rises and falls" that attends the Origenist scheme, for on it, the righteous man in Abraham's bosom could be cast down again into the flames. There would be no *security* against sinning once more. In contrast to Origen, Augustine believed that human history marches resolutely from its beginning in the garden of Eden to its conclusion at the last judgment. Moreover, according to Augustine, Scripture teaches that we sinned "in Adam," not "outside of him,"<sup>16</sup> as Origen's theory of a pre-cosmic fall implies. Origen was a "most compassionate" thinker, Augustine concedes, but his views on these matters have been condemned by the church and hence do not provide "correct" Christian answers to such admittedly difficult problems.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Origen, *De principiis* II, 5, 2 (GCS 22, 133-134).

<sup>13</sup> Origen, *De principiis* I, 8, 1 (GCS 22, 96-97).

<sup>14</sup> Origen, *De principiis* II, 9, 7 (GCS 22, 171).

<sup>15</sup> For overviews of the charges against Origen, see J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), chs. 18, 20-22, and Jon F. Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity: Epiphanius of Cyprus and the Legacy of Origen* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1988), part II.

<sup>16</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 166, 9, 27 (CSEL 44, 582-584); cf. *De civitate Dei* XI, 23; XII, 14; 21; XXI, 17 (CCL 48, 341, 368-369, 377-379, 793); O'Connell, *The Origin*, pp. 291-293, 323-324.

<sup>17</sup> Augustine, *De civitate Dei* XXI, 17 (CCL 48, 783).

Yet even if Origen's cosmic scheme would no longer be championed by the "orthodox," the pressure from determinists—which had stimulated Origen's views in the first place—had abated but little. Neither Manicheans nor *mathematici* (astral determinists) had vanished by the later fourth century, and their explanations, revolving around lost and saved "natures," on the one hand, and "fate," on the other, remained sufficiently compelling that all the theologians we shall here consider felt roused to assail one or both.

Although in his early years as a Christian convert Augustine had strongly attacked Manichean and astrological determinism, the attack on determinism became more problematic for him in his later years when he hinged his theology to theories of original sin and predestination. Augustine's Pelagian opponent, Julian of Eclanum, was quick to note that Mani's question, "If there is no natural sin, why baptize babies who clearly have done no wrong?"<sup>18</sup> found a resonance in Augustine's counter-claim to Julian that if you exempt infants who are subject to so many miseries from sin, you accuse God of injustice.<sup>19</sup> In order not to do so, Augustine came to insist, we must confess that original sin exists.<sup>20</sup> Augustine and Julian, we shall see, both attempted to answer the larger issues raised by the consideration of the wailing and expiring babies so as to address, in a new theological context, the issues of human freedom and God's justice. Their problems are those that were inevitably left over from the dissolution of the Origenist scheme.

Thus both sides in the Pelagian dispute affirmed human free will, although "free will" might receive a novel definition from Augustine in his claim that the will is indeed free—to choose wrong. Likewise, the origin of the soul had to be addressed. While the Pelagians opted for a creationist solution (i.e., that God created each soul individually), Augustine waffled on this issue until the end of his life, backing off from the traducian view of the soul's transmission through human generation that would have been logical for him to adopt; rather, he "resolved" the issue through a theory of original sin that remained unconnected to any particular position on the soul's origin. God's goodness likewise received diverse explications. For Pelagius and his supporters, God's goodness was revealed in the traces he had left in human nature, and by his giving of the law and of exemplary holy men, as well as Jesus, for our edification. For Augustine, God's goodness is

<sup>18</sup> Julian of Eclanum, citing from Mani's *Letter to Patricius*, in Augustine, *Opus imperfectum contra Julianum* III, 187, 5 (CSEL 85', 487).

<sup>19</sup> Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* II, 236, 2; cf. I, 97 and II, 110 (CSEL 85', 349, 114, 242-243).

<sup>20</sup> Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* III, 2 (CSEL 85', 352); *Contra Julianum* III, 3, 8 (PL 44, 705-706).



signalled by his rescue of the elect from the "mass of perdition" in which all humans are doomed. To unpack briefly these "Western" resolutions of the theological issues that Origen had so sharply posed for Christian theology is here my aim.<sup>21</sup>

The "Western" resolution of these theological issues did not, of course, emerge from a vacuum. Latin writers, as well as their Greek counterparts, had in the last decades of the fourth century and the opening years of the fifth wrestled with the questions of God's justice, the sin of Adam and Eve, and the origin of the soul (among other matters), but their discussions do not reveal a coherent solution to these problems; resolution would be left to their more theologically competent successors. Nonetheless, in the writings of theologians such as Ambrosiaster, Paulinus of Nola, and Rufinus the Syrian, we see issues coming to the fore that would dominate the controversy between Augustine and Pelagians—problems of God's justice in relation to human suffering, the origin of the soul, the sin of Adam and Eve, and related topics.

The debate that erupted in the second and third decades of the fifth century between Pelagians and Augustinians centered on interpretations both of Scripture and of church practices, most notably, those associated with infant baptism. Amid their varying interpretations, all participants in the controversy wished to square God's justice, power, and goodness with human freedom. By all the debaters, "Manichean" or "fatalist" explanations were ostensibly eschewed. We turn first to the Pelagian response to these questions, questions that had once more surfaced with the rejection of Origen's answers.

## II. THE PELAGIANS

Although Pelagius is sometimes declared to be more interested in "anthropology" than "theology," I believe, in contrast, that theological concerns—the defense of God's holiness and justice—stand as the foundation of his views. A citation from his famous *Letter to Demetrias* suggests as much:

Instead of thinking it a great privilege to be given commands by such an illustrious power . . . we talk back to God in a scornful and slothful

<sup>21</sup> Peter Brown's assessment of the Pelagian controversy as a bridge between East and West is apt in this context: "Seen in terms of the previous opinions and allegiances of Roman aristocratic Christianity, Pelagianism appears, once again, as an incident in the relations between the Latin and Greek worlds" ("The Patrons of Pelagius: The Roman Aristocracy Between East and West," *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 21 [1970], 72).

way. We say, "This is too hard and difficult; we can't do it. We are only human, and we suffer from weakness of the flesh." Blind stupidity! Arrogant blasphemy! We ascribe to the Lord of knowledge the guilt of a twofold ignorance: that he is ignorant of what he created, and of what he commanded. We imply that God the Creator forgot human weakness and put upon us commands that a human cannot bear. In doing so, we ascribe injustice to the Just One and cruelty to the holy God, the first by complaining that God commands the impossible, and the second by assuming that God condemns us for what we cannot help. We think of God as seeking our condemnation rather than our salvation, which is sacrilegious even to imply. . . . No one knows the extent of our strength better than the one who gave it to us. . . . Because God is righteous, he does not command the impossible; because he is holy, he does not condemn us for what we could not avoid.<sup>22</sup>

Far from being judged a cold-minded rationalist,<sup>23</sup> Pelagius might rather be seen as a thinker passionately concerned to construct a theology which avoided determinism—especially Manicheanism<sup>24</sup>—at all costs. God's absolute justice and nondetermination of human choice are points that ring loud in all Pelagian writings, whatever variations may be found on other issues.

Thus rejecting the Manichean solutions<sup>25</sup>—yet also rejecting the Origenist answer that rested on souls having a heavenly preexistence before their

<sup>22</sup> Pelagius, *Ad Demetriadem* 16 (PL 30, 31-32).

<sup>23</sup> The "rationalistic" side of Pelagius was stressed by Georges de Plinval, *Pélage: Ses écrits, sa vie et sa réforme* (Lausanne: Librairie Payot, 1943), p. 105; faulted by Torgny Bohlin, *Die Theologie des Pelagius und Ihre Genesis*, Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift 1957: 9 (Uppsala: A.-B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln; Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1957), p. 21.

<sup>24</sup> Commentators agreeing that the anti-Manichean stance of Pelagius's theology is of great importance are Bohlin, *Die Theologie*, pp. 13ff., 41, 106; Robert F. Evans, *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals* (New York: Seabury Press, 1957), esp. p. 22; Otto Wermelinger, *Rom und Pelagius: Die Theologische Position der Römischen Bischöfe im Pelagianischen Streit in den Jahren 411-432* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1975), p. 227; Theodore de Bruyn, *A Translation, With Introduction and Notes, of Pelagius's "Commentary on Romans"* (Ph.D. dissertation, Toronto School of Theology, 1987), pp. 44, 61. Believing that the point has been over-stressed is Georges de Plinval, "Points de vues récents sur la théologie de Pélage," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 46 (1958), 230.

<sup>25</sup> Anti-Manichean passages are found in such Pelagian sources as *De libero arbitrio* (PLS 1, 1540, 1543); *De vera circumcissione* 6; 7 (PL 30, 200, 201); *De castitate* 16 (PLS 1, 1499); *Ad Celantiam* 28 (CSEL 29, 456); Anianus, praefatio, John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Matthaeum* (PL 58, 625); *Libellus fidei* 10; 15 (PL 45, 1718). Anti-Manichean comments appear in thirteen passages in Pelagius's *Commentary on the Pauline Epistles* (my count): see his comments on Rom. 1:2; 6:9; 7:7; 8:7; 9:5; I Cor. 11:12; 15:45; II Cor. 3:7; 13:1; Gal. 5:20; Col. 1:16; Eph. 2:20; I Tim. 6:4; 6:16.

bodily incorporation<sup>26</sup>—Pelagius consistently interprets the Pauline letters to exclude any hint of divine determinism. Thus, as is well-known, Pelagius interprets passages that mention predestination to mean God's "foreknowledge" of a person's future way of life.<sup>27</sup> That "God had mercy on whom he will" (Romans 9:15) means that God foreknows who will be *deserving* of his mercy.<sup>28</sup> Pelagius's refusal to countenance any determination of human sinfulness from Adam is well illustrated by his treatment of Romans 5:12–15. That sin came into the world "through one man" is explained as meaning that Adam sinned and we followed him in sin.<sup>29</sup> Because other humans sin, as Adam sinned, they too shall experience death.<sup>30</sup>

The Pelagian claim that humans are able to fulfill God's commandments and to avoid sin rests not just on an understanding of God's justice and love, but also on a view of the strength of human nature and, as has recently been emphasized, on an affirmation of baptism's power to create a completely new being.<sup>31</sup> As Pelagius details in many works, the goodness of human creation is revealed by the capacities given us by God,<sup>32</sup> which when strengthened by the provision of the law, of exemplary holy men in the Bible, and the Christ,<sup>33</sup> suffice to enable us to will and to do the good. As Pelagius put it to Demetrias, "You confer your spiritual riches on yourself," a line that became somewhat of a *cause célèbre* in the controversy.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, baptism brings to perfection the gifts we have been given by creation and revelation. The washing away of "the old man" creates a new human being who is capable, with effort, to lead a life without sin.<sup>35</sup> Thus Paul can enjoin the church to be "without spot or wrinkle" (Ephesians 5:27), for individual Christians who pass through the baptismal laver are just

<sup>26</sup> Pelagius, *In Ephesios* 1:4; 1:10 (Souter, pp. 345, 347); cf. both Pelagius's and Caelestius's *Libelli Fidei* (PL 48, 503–504).

<sup>27</sup> Pelagius, *In Romanos* 8:29 (Souter, pp. 68–69); *In Ephesios* 1:11 (Souter, p. 347).

<sup>28</sup> Pelagius, *In Romanos* 9:15 (Souter, p. 75).

<sup>29</sup> Pelagius, *In Romanos* 5:12 (Souter, p. 45); cf. Pelagius, *De natura*, cited in Augustine, *De natura et gratia* 9, 10 (CSEL 60, 238); and Julian of Eclanum, cited in Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* II, 56, 1; 61; 194 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 203, 207–208, 309).

<sup>30</sup> Pelagius, *In Romanos* 5:12 (Souter, p. 45).

<sup>31</sup> A point especially emphasized by Bohlin, *Die Theologie*, pp. 31–36.

<sup>32</sup> For example, in Pelagius's *De libero arbitrio*, fragments in Augustine, *De gratia Christi* I, 3, 4; 18, 19 (CSEL 42, 127, 140); *Ad Demetriadem* 2–3 (PL 30, 17–19). Augustine argues that Pelagius stressed the goodness of creation at the expense of soteriology: *De natura et gratia* 34, 39 (CSEL 60, 261–262).

<sup>33</sup> Pelagius, *Ad Demetriadem* 4; 8 (PL 30, 20, 24–25); cf. *In Colossenses* 1:10 (Souter, pp. 452–453); *De libero arbitrio*, in Augustine, *De gratia Christi* I, 7, 8 (CSEL 42, 130–132).

<sup>34</sup> Pelagius, *Ad Demetriadem* 11 (PL 30, 28).

<sup>35</sup> Pelagius, *In Romanos* 9:1–2 (Souter, p. 72); *De libero arbitrio*, frag. 3 (PLS 1, 1543); *De poenitentia* 2 (PL 30, 250); *De divina lege* 2 (PL 30, 110). For the power of baptism to break evil custom in Pelagius's theology, see especially Bohlin, *Die Theologie*, pp. 31–36.

this.<sup>36</sup> Babies, too, although they are not born with sin, should be baptized into the church's communion of the blessed.<sup>37</sup>

Commentators agree that the controversial issues of the Pelagian dispute sharpened with Caelestius. It was he, apparently, who raised the issue of the transmission of sin to the forefront of discussion, away from Pelagius's favorite topics of human nature and the freedom of the will.<sup>38</sup> At the Council of Carthage in 411, Caelestius testified that the question of whether or not sin is transmitted was "open" in the church, and that some holy men, including Rufinus the Syrian, rejected the postulate.<sup>39</sup> Although many details of Caelestius's career remain obscure,<sup>40</sup> two of his main theses were the denial that inherited sin was transmitted to infants, yet the affirmation that they, like all Christians, should be baptized.<sup>41</sup>

The broadening of the controversy to highlight the transmission of sin and its effect upon children provoked the debate that would provide Augustine with the sharpest opponent he had ever confronted: Julian of Eclanum. It was here that the Pelagian and the Augustinian positions became most clearly defined. The issue of how sin's transmission reflected on marriage and procreation now became central. After more than a decade of battle with this new opponent, Augustine was left in his final years, ironically, and somewhat pathetically, defending himself against charges of "Manichean fatalism"—the very notion that he had begun his career as a Catholic polemicist by combatting.

We know much less about Julian of Eclanum than we would like. Despite the extensive research and recovery of material at the turn of the century by Albert Bruckner,<sup>42</sup> our understanding of his theological position is

<sup>36</sup> Augustine, *De gestis Pelagii* 12, 27; 28 (PL 42, 80-82).

<sup>37</sup> Pelagius, *Libellus fidei* 17 (PL 48, 490); *Expositio fidei Catholicae* (PLS 1, 1684).

<sup>38</sup> Gerald Bonner, *Augustine and Modern Research on Pelagianism*, Saint Augustine Lecture, 1970, Villanova University (Villanova, Pa.: Villanova University Press, 1972), p. 36; Pier Franco Beatrice, *Tradux peccati: alle fonti della dottrina agostiniana del peccato originale* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero/Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, 1978), pp. 54-55. For the central role of Caelestius in the determination of the North African debate, see Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 344-345.

<sup>39</sup> As reported in Augustine, *De gratia Christi* II, 3, 3 (CSEL 42, 168-169).

<sup>40</sup> Was Celestius really a "disciple" of Pelagius? What was his relation to Julian of Eclanum? For these and other issues, see Wermelinger, *Rom und Pelagius*, p. 30n. 153; pp. 35ff.

<sup>41</sup> Caelestius's *Libellus fidei* is found in PL 48, 498-505. See discussion of his theology in Wermelinger, *Rom und Pelagius*, pp. 45, 138; Beatrice, *Tradux peccati*, p. 44. For Caelestius's denial of original sin's transmission to infants, see the quotation in Augustine, *De gratia Christi* I, 33, 36; II, 6, 6 (CSEL 42, 153, 170).

<sup>42</sup> Albert Bruckner, *Julian von Eclanum: Sein Leben und Seine Lehre. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Pelagianismus*. TU 15, 3 (1897); idem, *Die Vier Bücher Julians von Aeclanum an*



incomplete—a situation not improved by the fact that his two major works of theology are preserved only as fragments by Augustine in his attempted refutation.

Julian's approach, like that of his Pelagian predecessors, was motivated by the desire to refute all varieties of fatalism. Writing to Rufus of Thessalonica after the appeal of the eighteen condemned Pelagian bishops had failed and Pope Zosimus had approved an anti-Pelagian decree,<sup>43</sup> Julian complains that Catholics like Rufus and himself must stand against "Manichean profanity," namely, that of his Augustinian opponents who under the name of "grace" preach fatalism.<sup>44</sup> Their "Manichean" attitudes are manifested in a variety of ways. They curse the old law and deny that the blessed people of the Old Testament lived righteously.<sup>45</sup> Worse yet, the "new Manicheans" claim that the Old Testament law was not given to justify the obedient, but rather to make the blame for sin more severe.<sup>46</sup> For Julian, such an argument implies blasphemy against God's providential care for the human race.

Another "Manichean" point against which Julian warred in his *Letter to Rufus* lay in the notion that "natural" evil was the cause of sin, i.e., the belief that Adam's sin was transmitted.<sup>47</sup> Against this view, Julian argues that the transmission of sin could take place *only* on the hypothesis of traducianism, the view that the soul is begotten from soul as body from body—and this view, he claims, the church curses. Adam passes no evil to others except death, which is not always so very evil, in any case.<sup>48</sup> Julian's allowance for the transmission of death from Adam, but not sin, links his position to that of Ambrosiaster, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Rufinus the Syrian—suggesting that this theory was acceptable to several Christian thinkers of the period.

The most sustained criticism of Augustinian "fatalism"—the "new Manicheanism"—undoubtedly lay in Julian's treatise *To Florus*, sizable portions of which are excerpted in Augustine's last mammoth writing, the *Opus im-*

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*Turbantius. Ein Beitrag zur Charakteristik Julians und Augustins* (Berlin, 1910; reprint, Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1973).

<sup>43</sup> For the history, see Bruckner, *Julian*, pp. 34-36; Wermelinger, *Rom und Pelagius*, pp. 205-206, 235-238.

<sup>44</sup> Julian, *Ad Rufum* (PL 48, 534).

<sup>45</sup> Julian, *Ad Rufum* (PL 48, 536). Julian objects to the Augustinian argument that the prophets and Apostles were not truly holy, just "less evil" than the rest of us (535). Cf. Julian, *Libellus fidei* III, 14 (PL 48, 521).

<sup>46</sup> Julian, *Ad Rufum* (PL 48, 534).

<sup>47</sup> Julian, *Ad Rufum* (PL 48, 535).

<sup>48</sup> Julian, *Ad Rufum* (PL 48, 535).



*perfectum contra Julianum* (*The Unfinished Work Against Julian*). Julian's strategic move in the treatise *To Florus* is to claim that those who hold a doctrine of original sin are necessarily traducians:<sup>49</sup> to derive a transfer of sin from Adam to all humankind, they must link the soul to the seed.<sup>50</sup> But, Julian continues, anyone who thinks that souls are so transmitted is kin to Mani.<sup>51</sup> This identification of traducians and Manicheans is explicitly noted by Julian at least seven times in *To Florus*.<sup>52</sup> And that Manichean fatalism is also linked to astrological fatalism is scored by Julian when he associates Augustine's teaching with "Chaldean and Manichean fantasies."<sup>53</sup>

Thus the question, Julian insists, rests on a disagreement about the soul's origin. Against opponents who must think that the soul comes "mixed with the seeds," Julian proclaims that the soul is created by God and then joined to the body: Julian is a creationist.<sup>54</sup> But Julian's point is not one that Augustine wants to address. As we shall see, Augustine consistently backs away from declaring himself on the origin of the soul:<sup>55</sup> he doesn't *know* how all humans can be said to be "in Adam,"<sup>56</sup> and he resents Julian's "taking refuge in a very obscure question about the soul."<sup>57</sup>

Julian's line of argumentation soon progressed to the issue of babies, where questions regarding God's justice received their sharpest form. Is not a God unjust who would condemn an infant who had contracted sin not by its own volition, but through its parents, Julian asks?<sup>58</sup> It would be better not to believe in God at all than to believe that he exists but is unjust!<sup>59</sup> Since infants do not yet possess the power of volition, they cannot commit any offense.<sup>60</sup> On Augustine's theory of infant sinfulness, fetuses ought to have wills if they are to be accused of sin—but how can they have wills when

<sup>49</sup> Julian, *Ad Florum*, in Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* I, 6 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 9).

<sup>50</sup> Julian, *Ad Florum*, in Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* II, 178, 2 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 298).

<sup>51</sup> Julian, *Ad Florum*, in Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* III, 173 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 474).

<sup>52</sup> Julian, *Ad Florum*, in Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* I, 27; 66; 75, 1; II, 27, 2; 142; III, 10; 123 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 23, 64, 90, 181, 265, 355, 440): my count.

<sup>53</sup> Julian, *Ad Florum*, in Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* I, 82 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 95).

<sup>54</sup> Julian, *Ad Florum*, in Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* II, 24, 1 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 178); IV, 90 (PL 45, 1391).

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* IV, 104 (PL 45, 1400); *Contra Julianum* V, 15, 53 (PL 44, 814).

<sup>56</sup> Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* II, 178, 2-3 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 298-299).

<sup>57</sup> Augustine, *Contra Julianum* V, 4, 17 (PL 44, 794): Augustine affirms that even if he doesn't know which notion of the soul's origin is correct, "original sin is."

<sup>58</sup> Julian, *Ad Turbantium*, in Augustine, *Contra Julianum* II, 1, 2 (PL 44, 673). For a discussion of the issue, see François Refoulé, "Misère des enfants et péché original d'après saint Augustin," *Revue Thomiste* 63 (1963), 341-362.

<sup>59</sup> Julian, *Ad Florum*, in Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* III, 9 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 355).

<sup>60</sup> Julian, *Ad Turbantium*, in Augustine, *Contra Julianum* III, 5, 11 (PL 44, 707).

they don't have souls and reason, both necessary for "the will" to function?<sup>61</sup> According to Julian, Augustine hands over the babies to the devil;<sup>62</sup> exhaling fumes more deadly than those of Lake Avernus, he delivers children to the flames before they are capable of choosing good or evil.<sup>63</sup> And all on account of someone's eating a piece of fruit, Julian scoffs!<sup>64</sup>

Such notions Julian continues, must imply a deficient understanding of baptism on Augustine's part. For if baptized parents still have original sin to pass on to their offspring, they must never have lost it.<sup>65</sup> Augustine must have a weak idea of baptism's efficacy, that it cleanses only "in part."<sup>66</sup> He must deny that we truly are made "new men" at baptism.<sup>67</sup>

And what is the function of infant baptism? For adults, Julian agrees, baptism is for forgiveness of sins and entry to the kingdom of heaven<sup>68</sup>—but what is the point of baptizing infants, who need no forgiveness of sins? Like several of his Pelagian colleagues, Julian affirmed the practice of infant baptism and declared that the same formula should be used for children as for adults.<sup>69</sup> In *To Florus*, Julian adds that baptism gives babies spiritual enlightenment, divine adoption, citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem, sanctification, and possession of the kingdom of heaven.<sup>70</sup> To their natural birth are added gifts of grace that enhance their created goodness.<sup>71</sup> What they do *not* receive is forgiveness of a sin that they do not have.

Julian thus tried to move the argument regarding transmission of sin toward a discussion of the origin of the soul. This attempt was rejected by Augustine, who refused to pronounce himself on the matter, claiming that the theory of original sin did not require any particular view of the soul's origin for its support. And that Augustine, the greatest thinker of the early Latin-speaking church, could not resolve the question, leads one to reflect yet again whether Origenism did not, whatever its theological defects, at

<sup>61</sup> Julian, *Ad Florum*, in Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* IV, 90 (PL 45, 1391).

<sup>62</sup> Julian, *Ad Florum*, in Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* I, 62 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 58); VI, 23 (PL 45, 1555).

<sup>63</sup> Julian, *Ad Florum*, in Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* I, 48, 3 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 37-38).

<sup>64</sup> Julian, *Ad Florum*, in Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* VI, 23 (PL 45, 1554-1555).

<sup>65</sup> Julian, *Ad Turbantium*, in Augustine, *Contra Julianum* VI, 7, 18 (PL 44, 833).

<sup>66</sup> Julian, *Ad Turbantium*, in Augustine, *Contra Julianum* VI, 13, 40 (PL 44, 843); cf. Julian, *Libellus fidei* III, 13 (PL 48, 521).

<sup>67</sup> Julian, *Ad Refum* (PL 48, 534; cf. 536): Ephesians 5:27 teaches that we *do* become perfect in baptism.

<sup>68</sup> Julian, *Libellus fidei* I, 14 (PL 48, 513).

<sup>69</sup> Julian, *Libellus fidei* III, 19 (PL 48, 523).

<sup>70</sup> Julian, *Ad Florum*, in Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* I, 53, 3 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 49).

<sup>71</sup> Julian, *Ad Florum*, in Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* V, 9 (PL 45, 1438); see discussion in François Refoulé, "Julien d'Eclane, théologien et philosophe," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 52 (1964), 49-51.

least provide a coherence that no other early Christian position—with the exception of Julian's version of Pelagianism—was able to match.

### III. AUGUSTINE

Long before any Pelagians clouded his theological horizon, Augustine was interested in issues concerning determinism. As is well-known and needs little mention here, his campaign against Manicheanism marked his first polemical effort as a Christian convert. Less well explored is Augustine's interest in the questions—and answers—posed by astral determinists. The question that especially caught Augustine's attention was the astrologers' claim that they could explain the diverse conditions of human life—a claim that Origen had set himself to refute in his attack on astral determinism in *On First Principles*.<sup>72</sup>

Augustine informs his readers in the *Confessions* that in his early life he was much intrigued by astrology.<sup>73</sup> At long last, he was “cured” of his penchant for astrology by the counsel of one wise friend<sup>74</sup> and by the disconfirming results of “experiments” performed by another who showed that men born at exactly the same moment emerged with very different statuses in life.<sup>75</sup>

A further disconfirmation of the truth of astrology was furnished by the young Augustine's reflection on the situation of twins: how can the discrepant destinies of Jacob and Esau be accounted for if astrological claims were true?<sup>76</sup> Since Jacob and Esau were conceived and born to the same parents at the same time, how, on the astrologer's premises, could their situations in life emerge so differently? Augustine will return to the example of Jacob and Esau, here used to refute the claims of astrology, in his exegesis of Romans 9 and in his debate with the Pelagians.

According to Augustine's early interpretation of Romans in the middle 390s, determinism of a different sort is ruled out: Paul does *not* mean to abolish human free will in Romans 9.<sup>77</sup> As for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, also mentioned in that chapter, we are to understand that God left Pharaoh to his own evil devices; God deserted him because of his impiety,

<sup>72</sup> Origen, *De principiis* I, praefatio, 5 (GCS 22, 12-13). Later, Origen was accused of favoring astrology: Photius, *Bibliotheca* 117 (PG 103, 395); Theophilus of Alexandria, in Jerome, *Ep.* 92, 2 (CSEL 56, 150).

<sup>73</sup> Augustine, *Confessiones* IV, 3, 4; V, 3, 3; VII, 6, 8-10 (CCL 27, 41, 58, 97-99).

<sup>74</sup> Augustine, *Confessiones* IV, 3, 5-6; VII, 6, 8 (CCL 27, 42-43, 97).

<sup>75</sup> Augustine, *Confessiones* VII, 6, 8 (CCL 27, 98).

<sup>76</sup> Augustine, *Confessiones* VII, 6, 10 (CCL 17, 99).

<sup>77</sup> Augustine, *Expositio 84 propositionum epistolae ad Romanos* 60, 2 (Landes, p. 30).

and God's punishment of his unbelief was just.<sup>78</sup> Augustine's early exegesis of Romans 9 is consistent with the position he had argued a few years before in *On Free Will*,<sup>79</sup> aimed to show that God, who is both just and good, cannot be the author of evil.<sup>80</sup> Since Augustine confesses that God is both just and changeless, humans who suffer must be held to do so for sins they themselves have willed. In *On Free Will*, Augustine alludes to the difficulty of explaining the suffering and deaths of infants. He rejects the Origenist answer (that the infants were paying for sins committed before they entered human bodies) and posits an alternative explanation, namely, that God is testing the adults who held the little ones dear.<sup>81</sup>

From his first anti-Pelagian works onward, Augustine had before him the questions of human freedom and God's justice, as had Origen before him, but gave the questions a different solution, namely, the transmission of original sin from Adam to the entire human race. When his Pelagian opponents declared that his theory was unfair to innocent sufferers such as babies and thus called into question God's justice, Augustine responded that original sin was the very doctrine *needed* to uphold God's justice, since without the premise of infants' sinfulness, we would have no way to account for their miseries—nor for what Augustine claimed was church teaching, that the unbaptizing ones who die will be cast into hell.<sup>82</sup>

In his first anti-Pelagian writing, *De peccatorum meritis (On the Demerits of Sins)*, conventionally dated to 411-412,<sup>83</sup> Augustine considers Paul's words on Jacob and Esau in Romans 9 and asks how the diverse fates of individuals can be accounted for. He rehearses the Origenist answer—without naming it as such—and rejects it: it was not that we sinned earlier in the heavens

<sup>78</sup> Augustine, *Expositio 84 propositionum epistolae ad Romanos* 62, 6-12; 16 (Landes, p. 34).

<sup>79</sup> *De libero arbitrio* was composed between 388 and 395: see Chronological table B in Brown, *Augustine*, p. 74.

<sup>80</sup> Augustine, *De libero arbitrio* I, 1, 1, 1-2 (CCL 29, 211).

<sup>81</sup> Augustine, *De libero arbitrio* III, 23, 66-88 (CCL 29, 314-315); Paula L. Fredriksen, *Augustine's Early Interpretation of Paul* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton University), 1979, pp. 180-190. It is of interest that Julius Firmicius Maternus (*Matheseos* I, 7, 13 ff. and I, 8, 6) gives "fate" as the answer to the problems of the innocent sufferer and the deaths of newborns.

<sup>82</sup> On *Sermo* 294, see E. R. Fairweather, "Saint Augustine's Interpretation of Infant Baptism," in *Augustinus Magister*. Congrès International Augustinien, Paris, 21-24 Septembre 1954 (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, n.d.), II, 897-904.

<sup>83</sup> O'Connell opposes this dating, arguing that *De meritis* must have been emended after 415 because Augustine doesn't apprehend until that date that Romans 9:11 is the key verse to stand against the view of souls sinning in a heavenly pre-existence (*The Origin*, pp. 13-14, 113-114, 104, 326). François Refoulé, in contrast, accepts the traditional dating of *De meritis* and argues that the work is aimed at Rufinus the Syrian's *Libellus fidei* ("Datation du premier concile de Carthage contre les Pélagiens et du *Libellus fidei* de Rufin," *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* 9 [1963], esp. p. 47).



and were thrust down to the world in bodies that suited our degree of sinfulness. Although this myth *does* provide an explanation for the diversity of deserts, Augustine admits, the teaching is “an improbable fable,” far removed from Christian teaching on God’s grace.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, the Origenist solution is ruled out by Paul’s words in Romans 9:11 (that Jacob and Esau were, respectively, elected and rejected, “although they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad”).<sup>85</sup> The answer lies in the original sin we acquire by our natural births,<sup>86</sup> the “sinful flesh” of the parents acting as a conduit that allows the transfer of the “injury” to the child.<sup>87</sup> Yet Augustine here, as to the end of his anti-Pelagian writings, refuses to link his teaching with a particular theory on the origin of the soul. Is the soul propagated along with the body, he asks?—and replies that he does not know, since Scripture does not give “clear and certain proofs” on the point.<sup>88</sup>

Bypassing a theory of the soul’s origin, Augustine instead substitutes a theory of original sin: “If the soul is *not* propagated,” he asks, “where is the justice that infants, who have just been created and are free from the contagion of sin, should be compelled to suffer the passions and other fleshly torments and even worse, the attacks of evil spirits?”<sup>89</sup> In other words, the trouble with the creationist option is that it allows no clear way to attribute sinfulness to babies that is a necessary attribution *if* we are to be able to claim that they *deserved* the miseries they suffer. Augustine here sounds as if he might espouse the traducianist option—but doesn’t. Probably the materialist notions of the soul that attached themselves to traducian theory were repellent to him.

Augustine also tried to reason about original sin and its transmission to infants from the point of view of the church’s practice. Although his sermons are difficult to date, *Sermon 294*, “On the Baptism of Infants, Against the Pelagians,” may stand relatively early in his anti-Pelagian period.<sup>90</sup> In this sermon, Augustine tried to reconcile the fate of infants who died without benefit of baptism—namely, eternal punishment—with the justice of God. Rejecting the view he reports some Pelagians held, that unbaptized

<sup>84</sup> Augustine, *De peccatorum meritis* I, 22, 31 (CSEL 60, 29-31).

<sup>85</sup> Augustine, *De peccatorum meritis* III, 9, 17 (CSEL 60, 143). On Augustine’s qualification of Romans 9:11 to allow for a life before our “proper life,” see O’Connell, *The Origin*, pp. 209-210, 243-244, 308-311.

<sup>86</sup> Augustine, *De peccatorum meritis* I, 9, 9 (CSEL 60, 10-11).

<sup>87</sup> Augustine, *De peccatorum meritis* III, 2, 2 (CSEL 60, 130).

<sup>88</sup> Augustine, *De peccatorum meritis* II, 36, 59 (CSEL 60, 127-128).

<sup>89</sup> Augustine, *De peccatorum meritis* III, 10, 18 (CSEL 60, 144).

<sup>90</sup> Dating proposed in *Oeuvres complètes de Saint Augustin* (Paris: Librairie de Louis Vivès, 1872), XVIII, 528 n.l. See Fairweather, “Saint Augustine’s Interpretation,” pp. 898-903.



babies are assured of eternal life because they have no sin, but cannot ascend to the kingdom of heaven without the sacrament,<sup>91</sup> Augustine replies that the parable of the last judgment in Matthew 25 affords us only two options: heaven or hell.<sup>92</sup> If unbaptized infants are excluded from the kingdom of heaven, there is no other place for them but the eternal flames,<sup>93</sup> and he adduces John 3:5 in support ("unless one is baptized with water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God").<sup>94</sup> Interestingly, Augustine concedes that he hasn't yet found any really good reason for this position beyond Scripture, but he is sure that there must be one. In the meantime, we should not "condemn divine authority" because of our human weakness.<sup>95</sup>

In 414 and the years thereafter, Augustine appears to have gained further information on the Origenist position regarding the soul—and to have rejected it. In 414, he states that he "utterly rejects" the notion that the soul is cast into the body as into a prison, where it atones for "former actions of its own of which I know nothing."<sup>96</sup>

In 415, Augustine seeks Jerome's views on the issue of the soul's origin.<sup>97</sup> On some points, Augustine reports, he feels certain, such as that the soul is not part of God, nor is it material.<sup>98</sup> But beyond this lie thorny questions of how the soul contracted the guilt that condemns infants who die unbaptized.<sup>99</sup> Since Augustine is sure that Jerome both believes in original sin<sup>100</sup> and holds a creationist position on the soul,<sup>101</sup> perhaps he can advise Augustine on how to harmonize the two affirmations. If souls are made daily, how do infants acquire sin? If they don't have sin at birth, it would not be compatible with God's justice to condemn them.<sup>102</sup> Augustine admits that his arguments in *On Free Will*—such as that by the suffering and death of children, God reproves their parents—now seem unsatisfactory.<sup>103</sup> Origen's the-

<sup>91</sup> See François Refoulé, "La Distinction 'Royaume de Dieu-Vie Eternelle': est-elle Pélagienne?," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 51 (1963), 247-254 on this topic.

<sup>92</sup> Augustine, *Sermo* 294, 2-3 (PL 38, 1336-1337).

<sup>93</sup> Augustine, *Sermo* 294, 4, 4 (PL 38, 1337-38).

<sup>94</sup> Augustine, *Sermo* 294, 8, 9 (PL 38, 1340).

<sup>95</sup> Augustine, *Sermo* 294, 7, 7 (PL 38, 1339).

<sup>96</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 164, 7, 20 (CSEL 44, 539); see O'Connell, *The Origin*, pp. 145-149.

<sup>97</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 166, 1, 2 (CSEL 44, 547); see discussion in O'Connell, *The Origin*, pp. 150-167.

<sup>98</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 166, 2, 3-4 (CSEL 44, 548-553).

<sup>99</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 166, 3, 6 (CSEL 44, 554-555).

<sup>100</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 166, 3, 6; 7, 21 (CSEL 44, 554, 557).

<sup>101</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 166, 4, 8 (CSEL 44, 557).

<sup>102</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 166, 4, 10; 6, 16 (CSEL 44, 560-561, 568-570).

<sup>103</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 166, 7, 18-19 (CSEL 44, 571-574); cf. *De libero arbitrio* III, 23, 68, 229-230 (CCL 29, 315).

ory, resting on a notion of cycles, fails to provide any sense of final *security* for Christians and hence must be ruled out.<sup>104</sup> The problem becomes acute when we consider the issue of those who die unbaptized:<sup>105</sup> whatever opinion on the soul turns out to be “right” must be in accord with the church’s dogma that infants must be baptized to be saved from perdition.<sup>106</sup>

Jerome chose not to respond. I suspect that Jerome did not *know* the answer to Augustine’s question; from his writings, we would gather that he had not even considered the issue problematic. It is highly significant that Augustine here presses Jerome hard on the notion of the soul’s origin: Augustine has sensed that this question *must* be answered by anyone seeking to uphold creationism and original sin at the same time. Since Jerome did both, Augustine apparently—and incorrectly—assumed that he had considered the links between the two theories. Jerome, I think, had not. So Augustine was thrown back onto his own resources.

#### IV. AUGUSTINE AND THE LATER PELAGIANS

By 418, a new dimension of the debate had made its appearance that would change its terms forever: Pelagians had raised the subject of marriage, sexual functioning, and reproduction in relation to the issue of original sin. In his treatises from this period, *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin*, *The City of God* XIV, and *On Marriage and Concupiscence*,<sup>107</sup> Augustine took on a new and difficult challenge, arguing that a theory of original sin’s transmission does *not* harm “the good of marriage.”<sup>108</sup>

Only between Book I and Book II of *On Marriage and Concupiscence* did Augustine learn of Julian of Eclanum’s polemic against him on the grounds that the theory of original sin and its transmission degraded marriage and reproduction.<sup>109</sup> Julian repeatedly pressed Augustine to give a more precise account of “where the sin comes from.” Does Augustine wish to fault gender differentiation? sexual intercourse? fertility?<sup>110</sup> Does he imply that God

<sup>104</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 166, 9, 27 (CSEL 44, 583).

<sup>105</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 166, 7, 20 (CSEL 44, 574-575).

<sup>106</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 166, 9, 28 (CSEL 44, 584-585).

<sup>107</sup> For Augustine’s discussion of the chronology of his and Julian’s works, see his preface to the *Opus imperfectum* (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 3-4).

<sup>108</sup> See esp. *De gratia Christi* II, 33, 38-40, 46 (CSEL 42, 196-205); *De civitate Dei* XIV, 21-22 (CCL 48, 443-444); and *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* I, 4, 5-7, 8; 17, 19 (CSEL 42, 215-220, 231-232). In *De gratia Christi* II, 31, 36 (CSEL 42, 195), the view that infants are required in this life for deeds they committed in another is attributed to “certain Platonists,” and Romans 9:11 is adduced against them.

<sup>109</sup> Augustine, *De nuptiis* II, 3, 7; 19, 34; 23, 38; 29, 49; 29, 50 (CSEL 42, 258-259, 287-288, 291-293, 304-305, 305-307).

<sup>110</sup> Augustine, *De nuptiis* II, 4, 13 (CSEL 42, 264-265).

made his image, man, for the devil?<sup>111</sup> Does Augustine imagine that infants have wills that they can be accused of sinning?<sup>112</sup> In several passages, Julian hints that the honor and justice of God are at stake. Was God so lacking in resources, he asks, that the only reward he could manage to bestow on holy men was to allow the devil to infuse them with "vitiation?"<sup>113</sup> Does Augustine, who *claims* that he believes in the goodness of reproduction, imagine that God used the procreative act so that the devil could win dominion over human beings?<sup>114</sup> The implications of Julian's arguments are clear: a God who would do such things is not worthy of the title.

With Book II of *On Marriage*, Augustine begins the struggle that would occupy him throughout the rest of his life. His answer to Julian here, as elsewhere, is twofold: the Bible teaches a doctrine of original sin and church practice confirms it. Romans 5 is the central court of appeal in the Bible.<sup>115</sup> For church practice, Augustine points to the customs of the exorcism and exsufflation of infants (i.e., the "blowing away" of the devil) before their baptisms. These practices show that infants are considered to be under "the power of darkness," from which they need release through baptism.<sup>116</sup> Cyprian of Carthage is appealed to as a defender of infant baptism—and Augustine makes out that his martyred episcopal predecessor espoused the practice for the same reasons that he did, namely, for the erasure of original sin.<sup>117</sup>

By the end of Book II of *On Marriage*, the argument between Julian and Augustine has centered on babies. Augustine claims that it is on the "behalf of infants" that he labors in writing his treatise. He paints himself and his partisans as the merciful deliverers of babies—over against Pelagians, whose position toward infants Augustine deems "cruel."<sup>118</sup> Augustine reasons that since Christ died for infants as well as for adults, they *must* be held guilty. To Julian's question, "*How* are they guilty?," Augustine can only respond, "*How* are they *not* guilty, since Christ died for them?"<sup>119</sup> "Jesus is Jesus even to infants," he intones, and to exempt them from salvation is a deadly trick

<sup>111</sup> Augustine, *De nuptiis* II, 16, 31 (CSEL 42, 284).

<sup>112</sup> Augustine, *De nuptiis* II, 27, 44 (CSEL 42, 297-298).

<sup>113</sup> Augustine, *De nuptiis* II, 13, 27 (CSEL 42, 280).

<sup>114</sup> Augustine, *De nuptiis* II, 27, 44 (CSEL 42, 298).

<sup>115</sup> Cited by Augustine in *De nuptiis* II, 5, 15; 8, 20; 27, 45; 27, 46; 27, 47; 29, 50 (CSEL 42, 266, 272, 298-299, 299-300, 302, 306).

<sup>116</sup> Augustine, *De nuptiis* II, 29, 50; 29, 51 (CSEL 42, 306, 307-308).

<sup>117</sup> Augustine, *De nuptiis* II, 29, 51 (CSEL 42, 307-308).

<sup>118</sup> Augustine, *De nuptiis* II, 35, 60 (CSEL 42, 318-319).

<sup>119</sup> Augustine, *De nuptiis* II, 33, 56 (CSEL 42, 313).

of the Pelagians.<sup>120</sup> It is notable that in this treatise Augustine does not directly address the question of the origin of the soul, but this theme he will take up in treatises he wrote soon thereafter, one of which is named *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians*.

Of interest for our argument is the zeal with which Julian and his colleagues in *their* letters (to which Augustine responds) had pushed the charge of "fatalism," and the equal zeal with which Augustine defends himself against this allegation. Augustine tries rather to turn their accusation of fatalism back against *them*: if Pelagians do not accept the notion of pre-existent merits or demerits, whether heavenly or earthly, as the explanation for why some babies die before they receive the good of baptism, and if the Pelagians refuse to accept Augustine's solution (that it is only God's grace that permits some babies to live long enough to receive baptism before they expire), what other explanation is left to the Pelagians except that of "fate"?<sup>121</sup> But, claims Augustine, fate will not work as an explanation. He tries to prove his point by appealing to a hypothetical example: when twins were born to a harlot who left them to be exposed, one baby, but not the other, was rescued. Neither the infants nor the sinful parents had any merits of their own to account for why one of the babies was saved and baptized. But neither can astral determinism explain the diverse ends of the infants, since as twins, their constellations were exactly the same.<sup>122</sup> Their case can be compared to that of Jacob and Esau, Augustine notes. It is simply because God gives grace to Jacob that he is saved; and Esau, because he, like all of us, is taken from a sinful "mass," deserves God's rejection. This, says Augustine, is the correct interpretation of the story.<sup>123</sup>

We should pay close attention to Augustine's argument here: by a remarkably clever sleight-of-hand, Augustine has detached the twins example from the arsenal of the anti-determinists (he himself earlier used the argument for this purpose) and had appropriated it to support his theory of predestination and the "mass of sin"! Despite his new predestinarian determinism, now bolstered by an anti-astrological argument about the diverse fates of twins, Augustine remains convinced that the "vessels of wrath" that are rejected by God *deserve* their fate—for if they don't deserve it, God would be seen as unrighteous.<sup>124</sup> But *why* they "deserve" this treatment now hangs on the presumption of original sin, rather than on Origen's theory of

<sup>120</sup> Augustine, *De nuptiis* II, 35, 60 (CSEL 42, 319).

<sup>121</sup> Augustine, *Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum* II, 6, 11-12 (CSEL 60, 470-473).

<sup>122</sup> Augustine, *Contra duas epistolas* II, 7, 14 (CSEL 60, 474-475).

<sup>123</sup> Augustine, *Contra duas epistolas* II, 7, 15; cf. II, 10, 22 (CSEL 60, 475-478, 483-484).

<sup>124</sup> Augustine, *Contra duas epistolas* IV, 6, 16 (CSEL 60, 538-540).



actual sin committed in heaven or on earth, or on Pelagius's theory of God's foreknowledge of evil deeds and/or of actual evil deeds meriting punishment, or on Augustine's own early opinion regarding God's foreknowledge of a person's lack of faith.

Arguments about babies also occupy sections of Augustine's treatise *Against Julian*. Church practice in exorcising and exsufflating infants shows that Christian theology assumes that children are born in the grasp of "the power of darkness."<sup>125</sup> Their behavior at baptism—spitting and wailing—proves how much they resist God's saving grace.<sup>126</sup> Those who don't believe that babies are so delivered by God's grace (namely, Julian) are enemies of children.<sup>127</sup> Yet Christ died for children, too!<sup>128</sup>—as Julian's own father must have believed when he hastened with his infant son to the baptismal font, not knowing how ungrateful his son would later be!<sup>129</sup> Although Augustine refuses yet again to take a position on the soul's origin,<sup>130</sup> he insists that the doctrine of original sin must be upheld if for no other reason than to account for the sufferings of babies.<sup>131</sup>

And not only is it infants' early deaths that must be accounted for: birth defects also are cited as "proof" of the theory of original sin. If babies did not have evil from their origin, we cannot imagine them coming into the world with such deficiencies: "God forbid!," Augustine shudders.<sup>132</sup> Only justice and goodness can be ascribed to God,<sup>133</sup> so he is not to blame for the babies' plight. Since God is not unjust, he must be rendering to them what is due for sin.<sup>134</sup> Augustine once more offers a "logical" solution to such issues without adopting Origen's scheme.

In his treatise *To Florus*, Julian pushed his opponent one stage further: anyone who holds a theory of original sin's transmission, Julian claimed, *must* be a traducianist,<sup>135</sup> and to be a traducianist is equivalent to being a Manichean,<sup>136</sup> since both believe that evil natures are given to individuals at

<sup>125</sup> Augustine, *Contra Julianum* VI, 5, 11 (PL 44, 829).

<sup>126</sup> Augustine, *Contra Julianum* IV, 8, 42 (PL 44, 759).

<sup>127</sup> Augustine, *Contra Julianum* III, 12, 25 (PL 44, 715).

<sup>128</sup> Augustine, *Contra Julianum* VI, 4, 8; 5, 13; 5, 14 (PL 44, 825, 829, 830-831).

<sup>129</sup> Augustine, *Contra Julianum* VI, 7, 17 (PL 44, 833).

<sup>130</sup> Augustine, *Contra Julianum* V, 4, 17; 15, 53 (PL 44, 794, 814).

<sup>131</sup> Augustine, *Contra Julianum* III, 3, 8-9 (PL 44, 705-706).

<sup>132</sup> Augustine, *Contra Julianum* III, 6, 13; cf. V, 15, 53 (PL 44, 709, 814).

<sup>133</sup> Augustine, *Contra Julianum* V, 10, 43 (PL 44, 809).

<sup>134</sup> Augustine, *Contra Julianum* II, 1, 3 (PL 44, 673).

<sup>135</sup> Julian, *Ad Florum*, in Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* I, 6; 27; 66; 75, 1; II, 14; 142; 178, 1 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 9, 23, 64, 91, 172, 297).

<sup>136</sup> Julian, *Ad Florum*, in Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* II, 27, 2; III, 10; 173 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 181, 355, 474); IV, 5 (PL 45, 1342).



birth. Julian has no sympathy with Augustine's protest that he doesn't know the origin of soul<sup>137</sup> or how all humans are one in Adam:<sup>138</sup> these questions must be answered.

In response, Augustine reverts to his earlier argument that it is Julian who is "cruel" to babies, for he doesn't allow them to be cured by the Savior's grace.<sup>139</sup> To say, as Julian does, that babies suffer miseries when they have no sin is to say that God is unjust<sup>140</sup>—and thus inadvertently to give help to the Manicheans, who introduce an "evil nature" as an explanation.<sup>141</sup> And if we imply that infants' birth defects are attributed to an "evil and unjust artisan," we also aid the Manichean cause.<sup>142</sup> Without original sin, there would be no certainty that unbaptized infants who die are doomed as "vessels of dishonor."<sup>143</sup> From Augustine's standpoint, God's justice is under attack by anyone who thinks that human misery, from infancy on, is *not* the consequence of sin.<sup>144</sup> Original sin is thus the necessary postulate for God's justice in Augustine's scheme—and the church's baptismal practices serve as "proof" for the thesis.<sup>145</sup> All this—and *still* no theory of the soul's origin!

## V. CONCLUSION

Pelagianism and Augustinianism have here been presented as two theological options, each driven by its own logic, to resolve the issue of how to reconcile God's justice with human freedom and suffering—especially the suffering of the innocent, of whom babies provide the exemplary case. The Pelagians, to whom the defense of God's justice was overridingly important, refused to entertain either the notion of demerits accrued in a former life (Origen's answer) or "original sin" (Augustine's answer). Although they apparently declined to give a *theological* explanation for the sufferings of the innocent,<sup>146</sup> this omission did not seem as significant to them as the "hole"

<sup>137</sup> Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* IV, 104 (PL 45, 1400).

<sup>138</sup> Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* II, 178, 3 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 299).

<sup>139</sup> Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* I, 32; cf. I, 54; 117; II, 2; 236, 2-3 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 24-25, 51, 134, 165, 349-350).

<sup>140</sup> Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* II, 236, 2 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 349).

<sup>141</sup> Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* II, 110 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 242-243).

<sup>142</sup> Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* III, 104 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 424-425).

<sup>143</sup> Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* II, 117, 1-2 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 249).

<sup>144</sup> Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* I, 72, 3; 72, 6; II, 236, 2-3 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 86, 87, 349).

<sup>145</sup> Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* III, 146, 1 (CSEL 85<sup>1</sup>, 452-453); V, 9 (PL 45, 1439).

<sup>146</sup> In this context, it is interesting to recall that the Pelagian Julian of Eclanum also refused to give a theological "explanation" for sexual desire, preferring to cite medical opinion on the "stirring up of the seed." See Julian in Augustine, *Contra Julianum* III, 13, 26 (PL 44, 715); and Elizabeth A. Clark, "Vitiated Seeds and Holy Vessels: Augustine's Manichean Past," in Karen L. King, ed., *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), pp. 367-401, esp. p. 377.

that they found in Augustine's theory: that the transmission of original sin, which logically should have been linked to a traducianist position, was left by Augustine to float free of *any* view about the soul's origin. Rather, his postulate of original sin "stood in for" a theory of the soul's pre-existence and fall into the body. It was Augustine's own, strikingly unique reconstruction of Origenist theodicy that was to influence all later Western theology.

# Confessional Churches and Their Theological Institutions

by CONRAD H. MASSA

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FOR A MERE Dean to be invited to participate in this significant way in the inauguration of a President is a daunting experience. But for a Calvinist camel to be invited to stick his nose into the Wittenberg tent\* is awesome! You will be reassured to know that President Hughes, good homiletician that he is, has reminded me that for a speech to be immortal it does not have to be eternal. He has even indicated what would be an appropriate length. Since I will not tell you what that is, you will not have the burden of watching to see if I make it. I know that this speech will not even approach immortality, and give you my word that it will not be eternal!

I begin with a personal note as the best way to lead into the major focus of this brief address. In the late 1960s I was the Senior Pastor of a Presbyterian congregation of 2,000 communicant members in Rochester, New York. I earlier had left a faculty position at Princeton having felt a calling to serve on the front lines of congregational action during the turbulent 60s and 70s. During the twelve years in Rochester, as in earlier years, I experienced the full ecumenical cooperation needed if congregations—and denominations—were to work effectively on major social needs. Furthermore, having studied with the legendary John A. Mackay, ecumenicity was not an unknown concept and ecumenical was certainly not a dirty word. It was against that background that something quite unexpected happened.

There came a letter from the new Roman Catholic Bishop of Rochester, Fulton J. Sheen, inviting me to teach homiletics part-time at St. Bernard's Seminary. Although I had more than enough to occupy my time, the lure of getting back into a classroom—and at a Roman Catholic school—was attractive. For the next five semesters I did just that. My first meeting with the Rector and the Dean of St. Bernard's was cordial but wary. They carefully raised the issue of what theological matter might be brought by a Presbyterian into the teaching of preaching. When I indicated I would probably start with St. Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*, they were visibly relieved. Thus began my involvement with ecumenical theological education. Later, a similar engagement at Colgate Rochester Divinity School brought an ac-

\* Inaugural ceremonies were held in a large tent on the Seminary quad.

quaintance with a still different theological world. Ecumenical theological education was now an experiential reality for me.

Still, upon my return to Princeton Theological Seminary in 1978, it was something of a shock to discover that in a basic class in preaching, with an enrollment of thirty-two students, half the class were Presbyterians and the other half represented *nine* other Christian groups ranging from Quaker to Roman Catholic. While my previous experiences helped me to be personally comfortable with this, I discovered a difference which was both challenging and troubling professionally. It was one thing to come into another tradition as an outsider and make some adaptations—including avoiding certain things—out of respect for that tradition and given the limited focus of one's responsibility. It was quite a different thing to operate out of the norms of one's tradition, in a situation where one faithfully had to represent that tradition and yet speak meaningfully to those as theologically different as Quakers and Roman Catholics. There *is* a theology of the Word out of which a Reformed theologian teaches preaching, and it does not completely accord with all other traditions.

Next came my first responsibility in our Ph.D. program. It was to chair the dissertation committee of a candidate named Robert G. Hughes, a Lutheran. This required my learning something about Luther's theology of the cross as well as accepting the fact that one did not have to feel a compulsion to identify a distinctly third use of the law in order to affirm the gospel. I am not sure who learned more through that association but my presence here, today, at least testifies that my personal relationship with the candidate did not suffer irreparable harm. I did, indeed, learn something about still another Christian tradition, this time in a relationship which, while housed in my institution, required me not to be the representative of my tradition to another, but which required me to be a partner in dialogue with a colleague from another tradition and to enter into his frame of reference.

These different kinds of ecumenical theological education encounters are something all of you have experienced in one setting or another. You have been the guest lecturing or teaching in the midst of another tradition. You have received into your student body those from other heritages. Whether professional theologians or members of the laity you have been in dialogue with peers who represent a span of theological and ecclesiastical points of view. All of this will only increase as the emphasis continues with the globalization of theological education.

The challenge which this particularly poses for institutions like yours and

mine is the question: *can a theological institution be both responsibly confessional and truly ecumenical?* Behind this dilemma there is another conversation which had been going on in theological education circles of the 60s and 70s. It concerned the place of the denominational school in the larger scheme. There were serious voices in Presbyterian circles and in others which suggested that the denominational school was an anachronism. Ecumenical biblical scholarship and historical understanding was showing the way. Certainly theology would soon follow. Church denominations could give the task of preparing students for ministry to the university-related divinity schools and to other nondenominational or interdenominational institutions. Churches could thereby free up money for the great mission opportunities which were before them.

While that issue may not have been felt in Lutheranism as strongly as it was felt elsewhere, another issue faces both of our denominations. It was forced on us Presbyterians by our reunion, and I understand it may be raised in your midst as well, particularly since the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It is the question of whether we have too many seminaries and whether they are located in the right parts of the country. I do not intend to address this question of whether Presbyterians, Lutherans, or others have the right *number* of theological institutions in the right locations.

What I *do* want to address is, for me, the more significant question raised by the above observations. That question is to ask what are the right *kind* of theological institutions to serve confessional churches such as the Lutheran and the Reformed?

I believe there are two parts to the answer. The first part is to affirm that *confessional churches such as ours need theological institutions which are not afraid to maintain a vital relationship to a Christian confessional communion*. A Department of Religion of a university will not do as the *primary* source for the trained ministry of a witnessing Christian communion. Please do not hear anything I am saying now as being in opposition to non-confessional or university-related theological institutions. I have high regard for the scholarly achievements of the Department of Religion of Princeton University, for example, and I am honored to serve as a member of the Advisory Council to that Department. But that Department has a *totally different mission* from the mission of Princeton Theological Seminary—and *neither one can or ought to be substituted for the other*. My purpose on this occasion is to affirm *this* institution in *its* mission at this point in history.

Were our churches to give over the task of theological education to even



the greatest of the universities, including those universities originally related to particular Christian traditions, we would be making the maintenance of our traditions and the emphases of our theological scholarship captive to the priority decisions of university budgets, and even more dependent upon the current mentality of our several professional guilds for a certain kind of professional recognition and approbation. We are all aware of the guild mentality pressures which already strongly influence the research emphases we choose. The "right kind" of theological institutions for us are those institutions which are not afraid to maintain a vital relationship to a Christian confessional communion—so long as it is affirmed that the relationship is such as to make possible our *freedom* to address with academic freedom and integrity the kinds of questions which are more relevant to such a relationship. That kind of relationship is not without danger and tension and cannot be taken for granted as we have seen demonstrated in the agonies of the Southern Baptist churches and their theological institutions.

In the second place, and this is implicit in the first but needs to be lifted up, *the "right kind" of theological institutions for us are those institutions which are not afraid to maintain a vital relationship to their theological tradition.* Here I would echo a distinction made by a Reformed theologian, John Leith. "Tradition is the living faith of dead people. Traditionalism is the dead faith of living people." My own basic affirmation would be this. *A theological tradition, which is the contemporary affirmation of understandings and convictions and commitments which have formed and shaped a community of Christians over a period of history, is a precious necessity for the continuity of theological memory and of existential hope.* The whole Christian world is enriched when we are willing to articulate today, in constructive engagement with present realities, the peculiar and particular insights which have come down to this day through those "traditions" we represent.

I hope enough has been said to assure you that I am not advocating a new parochialism. That was the reason for my opening recital of certain experiences and training which have helped to form my thinking. I have been, together with your own Dean Faith Burgess, a member of the Globalization of Theological Education Task Force of the Association of Theological Schools. Furthermore, I serve an institution at which sixty-seven denominations are represented in a student body which comes from forty-four states and twenty-four nations outside the United States. Nevertheless, I am convinced that my institution, and yours here, can serve such constituencies best when we are most responsibly the witnesses to our respective historical continuities.

Fortunately, there is recognition and support coming from the general educational world for the kind of diverse scholarship which we need to have represented especially in confessional theological institutions. Ernest L. Boyer, President of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has now released a special report which he first indicated in a speech to the Annual Meeting of the American Association for Higher Education. It is titled: *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*.<sup>1</sup> The Report takes on the "teaching versus research" debate and seeks to legitimate a broader, more inclusive form of academic scholarship.

In the words of this Report, "the work of the professoriate might be thought of as having four separate, yet overlapping, functions. These are: the scholarship of *discovery*; the scholarship of *integration*; the scholarship of *application*; and the scholarship of *teaching*" (p. 16). The scholarship of *discovery* is what academics mostly have in mind when they speak of "research." The pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, the process of freedom of inquiry, the exploration of alternative interpretations, the reexamination of axioms and propositions—yes, and of doctrine and dogma. The essence of academic freedom as it is usually conceived! Can this form of scholarship exist in a confessional institution? If conviction and openmindedness can exist in the same person—why not? The churches of the Reformation which understand themselves as *always being reformed* by the Spirit in the wisdom of God have no problem holding commitment and exploration together. Indeed, one might argue that without the substance of a tradition there can be no such thing as a cutting edge in theology. A cutting edge of thought is not like the grin on the Cheshire Cat in *Alice in Wonderland*. The Cat fades and the grin remains. The tradition fades and there is no more edge; just a cacophony of competing voices.

Actually the scholarship of discovery in the purest sense is not something most of us accomplish. There are very few Melancthons, Calvins, Luthers, Wesleys, Barths. Far more of us are involved in the scholarship of *integration*. The Boyer Report describes this as "making connections across the disciplines, placing the specialties in larger context, illuminating data in a revealing way. . . . serious disciplined work that seeks to interpret, draw together, and bring new insight to bear. . . . Is it possible to interpret what's been discovered in ways that provide a larger, more comprehensive understanding?" (pp. 18-19). This is a task which a confessional theological insti-

<sup>1</sup> The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 5 Ivy Lane, Princeton, New Jersey 08540, 1990. Copies are available from the Princeton University Press. Page numbers from the report are indicated immediately following quotations.

tution has a particular compulsion to perform as it is able to draw upon its norms—not only to critique, but also to enlarge, enrich, and energize.

The scholarship of *application* is a third form of research. It leads us to apply the knowledge which has been appropriated and synthesized to the problems and needs of institutions and individuals. It raises the issue whether social problems or institutional and ecclesiastical concerns can themselves “define an agenda for scholarly investigation” (p. 21). The relationship of a confessional seminary to a practicing faith community makes this third form of scholarship an absolute necessity—even as it provides the material and the context which make such scholarship possible. This is the form of scholarship in which you graduating students will immediately engage as your theological understanding interacts with the challenges of the parishes or institutions into which you are called.

Fourthly, there is the scholarship of *teaching*. The Boyer Report quotes Aristotle who said: “Teaching is the highest form of understanding” (p. 23). This is so because good teaching transmits, transforms and extends knowledge (p. 24). This is where the teacher in a confessional theological institution has a particular responsibility. Boyer makes this claim for the teacher. “Without the teaching function, the continuity of knowledge will be broken and the store of human knowledge dangerously diminished” (p. 24). Without the teaching of confessional theological institutions, the continuity of theological understanding will be broken and the store of theological perception will be dangerously diminished.

The Boyer Report makes it clear that these intellectual functions are “tied inseparably to each other” (p. 25). They are separated for the purpose of analysis. But such an analysis makes us acutely aware of how significantly they can be related to our theological task and speak to certain aspects of that task in highly relevant ways.

President Hughes told me that he would not mind if I said something directly about his responsibility as President. Bob, your job is to make all this possible. Your job is to make the faculty’s work possible. Your job is to make the student’s task possible. Your job is to make the church’s mission possible. All of us are here today to say we believe that, with Christ’s help, you can do it! God bless the President of The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. Let all the people say—Amen.

# E Pluribus Unum?

by THOMAS W. GILLESPIE

Farewell Remarks to the Class of 1991  
by the President of the Seminary

ONE OF the cultural theologians you may have missed during your years of study at Princeton Seminary is Woody Allen. Void of answers, Woody is full of questions. Short on solutions, he is long on analysis.

Consider this astute observation: We stand at a great crossroad. One way leads to complete annihilation; the other to total despair. We must make the right choice. That is counsel worthy of a graduating class. When I shared it with Dean Massa, he opted for total despair because that can be overcome. Complete annihilation is more difficult to surmount.

Woody Allen speaks in hyperbole, of course, but his point cannot be ignored with impunity. The world into which you now go forth, whether directly into ministry or indirectly through further academic study, does stand at a great crossroad. Perhaps it has been so since the day Adam and Eve departed from the garden of Eden. Life is a matter of choices and history turns on the choices we make. What changes over time is not the need to resolve issues, but the issues that require resolution.

Only God knows for sure the challenges that will confront you as you live and minister your way into the twenty-first century. But Peter Drucker points out in his latest book, *The New Realities*, "that the 'next century' is already here, indeed that we are well advanced into it." The clues to the future, in other words, are given in the realities of the present. For this reason it requires no prophetic powers of prediction to recognize that one of the crucial issues of the future which is already with us is that of *community*. On what basis can we hope to live our lives *together*?

The answer to that question is not at all evident. Our cultural world increasingly recognizes and celebrates its differences, whether they be racial, ethnic, gender, political, social, economic, or religious. "Pluralism" is today a slogan that makes a virtue out of necessity. Human differences are obvious, often painfully so, but it is dubious whether they can create and sustain human community.

We are encouraged to listen to the voices of the marginalized people of our society, the voices of those long silenced, and it is appropriate that we open our ears to them. The problem is that these voices tend to be more and



more individual and less and less communal. Who among women speaks for all women? Who among African-Americans speaks for all African-Americans? Who among Democrats and Republicans speaks for all Democrats and Republicans? Who among Christians speaks for all Christians? The signs of the times increasingly indicate a fragmentation of the human community in which ultimately each voice speaks only for itself. Such fragmentation signals the loss of community.

Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. attests to this loss in our nation in a new publication entitled *The Disuniting of America*. He notes that those of our forebears who came to this land of their own volition did so to escape their origins, but we are today in search of our roots. "The contemporary ideal is shifting from assimilation to ethnicity," he writes, "from integration to separatism." Schlesinger readily acknowledges that our "ethnic upsurge has had some healthy consequences:"

The republic has at least begun to give long-overdue recognition to the role and achievements of groups subordinated and ignored during the high noon of male Anglo Saxon dominance—women, Americans of South and East European ancestry, black Americans, Indians, Hispanics, Asians. There is far better understanding today of the indispensable contributions minorities have made to American civilization.

But, Schlesinger adds, "the cult of ethnicity, pressed too far, exacts costs." Chief among them is the loss of a national community. Noting that the "national ideal had once been *e pluribus unum*," Schlesinger asks: "Are we now to belittle *unum* and glorify *pluribus*? Will the center hold? Or will the melting pot yield to the tower of Babel?"

What is true of our nation is equally true of faith communities. Frederick Buechner speaks to this issue in the third of his published memoirs, *Telling Secrets*. As you well know, Buechner, the author and novelist, is a Presbyterian minister who received his theological education at Union Seminary in New York City. Those years at Union, he writes, "were among the richest in my life." Recalling the intellectual excitement at Union during the early 1950s, he comments:

Reinhold Niebuhr was there then and so was Paul Tillich, Samuel Terrien, Paul Scherer, John Knox, George Buttrick, Robert Macafee Brown, and above all the great James Muilenburg, who more than any of them became my father and brother in Christ.



"But in addition to the excitement and challenge of those extraordinary teachers," he continues, "there was no less richly an extraordinary sense of community." Of this Buechner writes:

God knows there was nothing homogeneous about the place. I can't think of a theological position or denominational affiliation that wasn't represented by one or the other of the men and women who had come to study there from almost every part of the country and every kind of background both intellectual and social.

But beneath all those ways in which we differed from one another there seemed to me to be something deep and life-giving that all of us shared.

Thirty years later Buechner was invited to teach a class at the Divinity School of Harvard University. He relates that he accepted the invitation in the hope of finding again the sense of community he had experienced in his own student days. "But though in other ways I found things of value there," he comments sadly, "in that way I have to admit that I found little or nothing. . . . Whatever may have bound my students together elsewhere in the way of common belief or commitment," he observes, "I was much more aware of what divided them."

Harvard Divinity School was justly proud of what it called its pluralism—"feminists, humanists, theists, liberation theologians all pursuing truth together." But what Buechner learned from that experience is "that the danger of pluralism is that it becomes factionalism, and if factions grind their separate axes too vociferously, something mutual, precious, and human is in danger of being drowned out and lost" (pp. 58-64).

Many of you have made it clear that your experience here at Princeton Seminary is not unlike that of Frederick Buechner at Harvard Divinity School. Personally, I think you have known community more fully during these student days than you are able to acknowledge and certainly more than you will experience again for a long time to come. Nonetheless, I understand the problem. Princeton Seminary is not only in the world, but the world is equally in Princeton Seminary. To the extent that we have in fact failed to establish and sustain a life together that Buechner calls "mutual, precious, and human," we have succeeded in reflecting our world.

But now the ball is in your court. Now you go forth into ministry, and that will involve you in the task of creating the nurturing community elsewhere. Whether that be in a congregation, or in social service, or in further

academic work, the issue of community will be looking you right in the eye. Schlessinger asks, "Can the center hold?" That depends upon who or what is the center.

The center for us is the triune God who in Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit creates and sustains the community called the church. That center can and will hold. Your task—no, make that *our* task—is to realize the gift that God has already given.

Perhaps Woody Allen does not speak in hyperbole after all. On the issue of community we stand at a great crossroad. Woody's mistake is not offering us all of the alternatives. For in addition to complete annihilation and total despair there is the life and hope which God has set before us in the gospel. As Buechner puts it, beneath all those ways in which we differ from one another there is "something deep and life-giving" that in faith we all share.

May God empower the Class of 1991 to choose the road that leads to an authentic life together, and to walk it all the days and years of ministry that are before each one of you.

# Words, Words, Words

by THOMAS G. LONG

*The baccalaureate sermon this year was delivered by Thomas G. Long, the Francis Landey Patton Professor of Preaching at Princeton Theological Seminary.*

Text: John 4:16-26

I would like to begin by saying two things to the Class of 1991. First, I would like to express my gratitude to all of you for the invitation that you have given to me to be the preacher at this service, your baccalaureate. You have a very fine class; I feel as though I have a special personal relationship with many of you, and I am honored to have the privilege of serving in this way.

The second thing I want to say is that you do not really know whether I just told you the truth or not. As a matter of fact, I did tell the truth. *I am* honored to be preaching here today, but saying that it is an honor and a privilege and so on is the sort of thing that people in this position are *supposed* to do. For all you know, my real feeling is that being up here today is a headache and a chore, just one more task to perform at the end of an already too busy year. The words that come out of my mouth are “honor, privilege, and gratitude,” but, after all, they’re just words. Words, words, words.

One doesn’t have to search very far in our world to realize that we live in a culture that doesn’t trust words very much. We use words by the bushel. We are the “Information Age.” We process words by the billions, but we don’t trust them very much. We know that words can be slippery, weasel things. Words can be used to conceal, to deceive, to distort. Words are cheap; people can hide behind words.

When a politician gives a speech, what do we say? “Promises, promises.” When the telephone company says, “We’ll be by to install your phone on Thursday at 2:00. You can count on it,”—we don’t. When George Bush speaks boldly of building a “new world order,” it sounds vaguely like the “old world order” to us.

We don’t trust words. They are sneaky; talk is cheap. Don’t give us words; give us *substance*. As Eliza Doolittle says to her two suitors in “My Fair Lady”:

Words, words, words . . . is that all you blighters can do?

Don’t talk of stars burning above; If you’re in love, *show* me!

Or, as Edgar Guest put it, uncomfortably close to home: I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day.

This distrust of words is nothing new, of course. Indeed, it's been in the human spirit almost from the very beginning. According to the story of Adam and Eve, the situation began to deteriorate in Eden precisely at the point that the serpent began to raise the possibility that words just might not be all that they seem: "Did God say . . . ? No, you will not die." Words are a gift from God. They were, in a sense, the first sacramental elements of communion. Whatever else we lost in Eden, we lost the trustworthiness of language. Men and women became afraid, and because they became afraid, they began to hide—from God and each other—behind fig leaves and behind lying words:

"Where is your brother?"

"I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

Now, all of this should give us some concern today, since we are sending out the Class of 1991 to do ministry basically with words. Financiers have capital; physicians have medicines; farmers have seed and soil; soldiers have guns; ministers have—words. Words, words, words. Sermon words, prayer words, liturgical words. Where there is grief, words of comfort. Where there is injustice, prophetic words. Where there is complacency, challenging words. Words, words, words.

That is why it is important to hear this day the claim of the gospel that, in Jesus Christ, we get our words back, that the words we speak can become filled with grace and truth, instruments of redemption. That is part of what this story of Jesus and the woman at the well is all about. What did Jesus really do for this woman? He did not heal her of any disease; he did not raise her child from the dead; he did not dazzle her by turning the water into wine. He simply talked to her. Words, words, words. But the words he spoke were so radically different from the other words she had heard, words so filled with grace and truth, that she was never the same again.

It is important to note that this story does not begin with words. Quite to the contrary, it begins in silence. Not gentle, tranquil silence, but hard, cold silence because she who came to the well was a Samaritan and he who rested at the well was a Jew.

She who came to the well was a woman; he who rested at the well was a man. Between Samaritan woman and Jewish man there was a wall of silence, built brick by brick with prejudice and hatred, through which no word was allowed to pass.



"Would you give me a drink of water?" said the Jewish man to the Samaritan woman, and the wall came tumbling down. One word, one seemingly ordinary phrase, a quiet word that cut against the grain of the culture, and the wall came tumbling down.

It is amazing to me how often significant ministry takes place in not very dramatic ways. Oh, sometimes there is the sensational confrontation with Caesar or the thrilling turnaround to faith, but most of the time, ministry is something like the speaking of a single surprising word. Like the December day in 1955 when a bus driver in Montgomery, Alabama ordered four people in a row of seats to move to the back of the bus. It is said that one of these people, a department store clerk named Rosa Parks, spoke so softly that it was hard to hear her voice over the noise of the bus.<sup>1</sup> What she said was, "No," and a wall came tumbling down.

William Willimon of Duke University tells about a young woman named Anne who was a member of a congregation he served. After college Anne had entered pharmacy school, but from time to time she came home and worshiped with her parents. One Sunday evening, after one of her visits, Will received a telephone call from Anne's father:

"Do you know what's happened?" he said. "Anne just called us to say that she has decided to drop out of pharmacy school."

"Really?" Will said. "What on earth is leading her to do a thing like that?"

"Well, we're not sure," he said. "You know how much Anne likes you. We thought maybe you could call her up and talk some sense into her."

Will did just that. He reminded Anne of all her hard work and her achievements and how she should think carefully before throwing all of this away. "How in the world did you come to this decision?" he asked her.

"It was your sermon yesterday that started me thinking. You said that God has something important for each of us to do, in our own way. I thought to myself, 'I'm not here because I want to serve God. I'm here to get a job, to make money, to look out for myself.' Then I remembered the good summer I spent working with the church literacy program among the migrant workers' kids. I really think I was serving God then. I decided, after your sermon, to go back there and give my life to helping those kids."

<sup>1</sup> Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954-63* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), p. 129.

There was a long silence on Will's end of the line. "Now look, Anne," he finally said, "I was just preaching."<sup>2</sup>

Sermon words . . . and the wall came tumbling down. When the wall falls down between Jesus and the woman, she seems startled—perhaps even frightened. There's something comforting about a wall. It may hem us in, but at least we don't have to face what's on the other side of it. The woman fires a flurry of words at Jesus, in disbelief that the wall has fallen, perhaps even trying to rebuild the wall as a hiding place. Beneath the words, he hears the person; in the windstorm of her words, Jesus hears the woman:

"Why is it that you, a Jew, ask for water from a Samaritan woman?"

"If you knew the gift of God, you could have asked, and he would have given living water."

"Who do you think you are? You haven't even got a bucket. Even Jacob had to have a bucket. Are you greater than Jacob?"

"Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, but those who drink of the water I give will never be thirsty."

It was then that the woman said the fatal word, the word that caused the death of her old self, and gave her new life: "Give me this water that I may never be thirsty."

"All right," said Jesus. "Go call your husband."

"I have no husband."

"That's right. You have no husband. You've had five husbands, and the one you are with now is not your husband. You told the truth when you said you have no husband."

Now the commentators have raised a lot of eyebrows about this woman, as if she were some sort of merry divorcee, the Liz Taylor of ancient Samaria, trading in husbands like sports cars. Women in the first century did not have that option. She has not devoured husband after husband; she has been devoured by a social system that, for whatever reason, has passed her from man to man to man until she no longer has even the dignity of marriage. When Jesus talks about her husbands he is not so much exposing her sin as he is naming her wound. With a word he has touched the issue in her life.

A former student of mine graduated from seminary and became the pastor of a small Presbyterian church, small enough so that she set for herself the goal of visiting every family on the roll in the first six months. At the

<sup>2</sup> William H. Willimon, *What's Right With the Church* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), pp. 112-113.

end of six months, she had almost done it. She had visited every family, but one. "They haven't been here in two years," people said. "Don't bother; they aren't coming back."

She had set her goal, though, and so one afternoon she drove out to their house. Only the wife was at home; she poured cups of coffee and they sat at the kitchen table and chatted. They talked about this; they talked about that; then they talked about *it*. Two-and-one-half years earlier she had been at home with their young son. She was vacuuming in the back bedroom and had not checked on him in a while, so she snapped off the vacuum, went into the den, and did not find him. She followed his trail, across the den, through the patio door, across the patio, to the swimming pool, where she found him. "At the funeral, our friends at the church were very kind. They told us it was God's will."

The minister put her cup down on the table. Should she touch it, or should she not? She touched it. "Your friends meant well, I am sure, but they were wrong."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"I mean that God does not will the death of children."

The woman's face reddened, and her jaw set. "Then whom do you blame? I guess you blame *me*."

"No, I don't blame you. I don't want to blame God, either."

"Then how do you explain it?" she said, her anger rising.

"I don't know. I can't explain it. I don't understand why such things happen, either. I only know that God's heart broke when yours did."

The woman had her arms crossed, and it was clear that this conversation was over. The minister left the house kicking herself: "Why didn't I leave it alone." A few days later the phone rang; it was she. "We don't know where this is going, but would you come out and talk with my husband and me? We have assumed that God was angry at us; maybe it's the other way around."

With a word, to touch the issues in peoples' lives. When Jesus named the issue in her life, the woman tried to change the subject:

"I see that you are a prophet," she said. "Now let's see, you prophets like to talk theology. Isn't it interesting that you Jews worship in Jerusalem, and we Samaritans worship on the mountain. Isn't that a fascinating theological difference. Would you care to comment on it? After you do, maybe we can move on to eschatology."

"Woman, I tell you," said Jesus. "The hour is coming, and now is,

when the mountain, the temple, it won't make any difference. What will make a difference is you—your worship in spirit and in truth.”

“Me? Make a difference? To God? When hell freezes over . . . when Messiah comes.”

That's when Jesus said the best word of all. “I am he.” The one who, with a word, breaks down the walls. The one who, with a word touches the deepest wounds of your life. “I am he.” In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. “I am he.” Jesus was the Word, and because she was transformed by that Word, she, who had been locked in silence, left that place with a word to live and a word to speak.

My uncle Ed ran an American Oil service station in a small town in South Carolina. He was a wonderful man. He hunted and fished and told loud, uproarious jokes and people loved him. While he was still a young man, his big heart failed him, and the family gathered for the funeral. I was a young teenager at the time. The minister at Ed's church was on vacation, and despite assurances from the family that he needn't come back for the service, he insisted and interrupted his time away to return.

He drove the many miles back, arriving just in time to come by the family home and to accompany us to the church for the funeral. I will never forget his arrival. Indeed, as I look back on it now, it created in me one of the first stirrings toward ministry. The family was all together in the living room of Ed's home, and, through the big picture window, we saw the minister arrive. He got out of his stripped down Ford, all spindle-legged, wearing a cheap blue suit, clutching his service book like a life-preserver. Now that I am a minister myself, I think I know what was going through his mind as he approached the house: “What to say, dear God, what to say? What words do you speak when words seem hardly enough?”

What he did not know, could not know, is how the atmosphere in that living room changed that moment we saw him step out of his car. It was anticipation, but more than that. His arrival was, in its own way, a call to worship. This frail human being, striding across the lawn in his off-the-rack preacher suit, desperately trying to find some words of meaning to speak, brought with him, by the grace of God, the presence of Christ. In his presence and in his words—words, words, words—was the living Word.

And because the Word became flesh and dwells among us . . . so will it be for you, too. So will it be for you.



# Bless the Lord

by J. CHRISTIAAN BEKER

*Author of Paul the Apostle and The Triumph of God: the Essence of Paul's Thought, J. Christiaan Beker is the Richard J. Dearborn Professor of New Testament Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary.*

Text: Psalm 103: 1-7, 19-22

IT MAY seem strange in this Advent Season to select a text from Israel's Psalter in order to prepare us for Christmas—for God's gift of Christ to us.

My choice may seem all the more strange when we notice the highly individualistic and private content of Ps. 103:

"Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me—bless his holy name!"

How can this Psalm of *personal* piety prepare us for the *universal* and *cosmic* event of Christmas, and in what way is it able to address the pressing ecological and political issues of our time?

Does not this text tempt us away from all these issues in order to welcome us to the safety of a privatistic shelter, i.e., to invite us to a docetic withdrawal from the real world into a pietistic haven?

Moreover, why choose a *Todah*-Psalm—a Psalm of praise and thanksgiving, a doxology, whose sole focus is the urging to the soul to bless the God of goodness and salvation?

Is not there much more reason to select a Psalm of lament, to reflect on the cruel ways in which God often deals with us, and to reflect with Albert Camus on the silent indifference of God toward many of us, when we experience so frequently a seemingly absurd world, gripped by "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune"?

I have neither an easy nor a solid answer to these questions.

I don't even know how I travelled in my own life the road from complaint and doubt to thanksgiving and gratitude.

However, one thing I do know: my journey from complaint to blessing and gratitude is not simply the result of the resignation of old age; rather it is the fruit of a fundamental change in my perspective on reality, i.e., a new conviction of what really counts in life. For example: Ps. 103 helped me to discover why I always prefer to listen to the *Fugues* and *Cantatas* of J. S. Bach in my office, even while heavily preoccupied with the scientific study of the Bible.

Indeed, this Psalm made me aware that our concentration on anthropology, sociology, rhetoric and on the so legitimate concerns of blacks and women remains *empty*, unless we remember from day to day that our personal life and action are *anchored* in the majestic reality of God—in the God whom the Psalmist urges us to bless, because he has blessed us and continues to bless us.

Moreover, Ps. 103—along with the Psalter as a whole—teaches me that all my speech *about* God is *empty*, unless it is simultaneously speech *with* God.

In other words, the Psalter teaches us that theology without doxology disintegrates into “religious voyeurism” and into ideological theological bickering, which suffocates the praise of God by his people.

And so Ps. 103 is for me a profound commentary on Bach’s music: for perhaps no theologian has grasped the priority of the majesty and tender mercy of God better than Bach, the musician.

Within this context we must realize that our blessing of God is not a world-avoiding privatistic exercise. Rather it poses to us the question of what constitutes our identity in the world: *Where* is our life anchored? *Whence* does it derive its selfhood and stance in the world? And *what* does it dare to hope for?

The urging of the Psalmist to bless the Lord is motivated by an appeal to our *memory*: “Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all his *benefits*” (v. 2). Our blessing of the Lord, then, is a daily remembrance of the *ground* of this blessing, i.e., in the words of the Psalmist: “he made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel” (v. 7).

Indeed, our blessing of God in our life of prayer is able to transform “the habit of our being,” i.e., to change our customary habit of plaintive routine into a life of *gratitude*.

For we must be aware that the fruit of *blessing* the Lord constitutes our true *blessedness*, our true happiness, which cannot remain hidden. For, when I bless the Lord, my experience of blessedness shifts my perspective on reality: it enables me to *relativize* things, which the world around me deems to be of ultimate importance; moreover, it makes me remember that the glory of the Lord of my life—and not my own glory—constitutes my true selfhood. And finally, in blessing the Lord with all my soul, my own blessedness may possibly make me a blessing for *others*—for all those around me who feel betrayed and abandoned by the God of blessing; those for whom the God of blessing has become a God of curse.

However, while we bless the Lord we should not forget that this blessing

cannot be a blessing of private fulfillment, for the Psalmist reminds us in his final line that God's blessing of us contains as well a hope. Thus he calls on all creation to bless the Lord: "Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion" (v. 22).

And so my blessing of the Lord can only then be *authentic*, when it realizes its *provisional* nature. Our *thanksgiving*, then, must necessarily include the urgent *petition* that God's sovereign majesty and steadfast love—which the Psalmist so frequently emphasizes—will lift the burden of suffering of the oppressed of the earth, and that God will complete the fullness of his blessing by embracing his groaning creation in his loving arms.

It seems to me, then, that Ps. 103 evokes in us what Bach understood so well and what the Westminster Shorter Catechism expresses so well when it defines the chief end of a person's life in these terms: "A person's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever."

Thus Ps. 103 points us in this time of Advent to the God of Israel, who at Christmas time promises not only to reaffirm his steadfast love to us, but also to bring new hope of blessing to his confused and suffering world.

And so may we, driven by this hope, join the Psalmist in her praise:

"Bless the Lord—O my soul and all that is within me—bless his holy name." Amen.

# Religion is Not Enough

by WALTER E. WIEST

*Walter E. Wiest is Professor emeritus of the Philosophy of Religion at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. His homily was given in Miller Chapel in September 1990.*

Text: Amos 5:21-24

MANY YEARS ago, I heard a Jewish scholar make a statement that has stuck in my mind. He observed that those of us who are religious usually assume that it would be right and desirable for everyone else to be religious, and the more religious the better. But is that so? His answer was "No." Being religious, he maintained, is something for which some individuals have a special aptitude and some have not, just as some have an aptitude for mathematics or music and some have not. Some of us can never be very religious.

In a similar vein, I recall a Jesuit friend of mine once saying that he believed in God simply as a fact; God just *is*. "But," he said, "I am not very religious." He joined the Jesuits because he wanted to be a teacher. He conformed to the religious exercises required by his order but kept them to a minimum.

I have sympathy for such sentiments. I find that I am less religiously inclined than many others. I admire those who are deeply religious. I wish I were more like them, but I am not. Consequently (and perhaps somewhat defensively), I have made use of my own version of a distinction between "religion" and "faith." It is a rough distinction and no doubt could be improved, but I believe it can be substantially supported by Scripture. I want to offer it to you and then draw some conclusions from it that bear upon the relation between religion and social action within the Christian life.

I take "religion" to refer to the forms of prayer and worship, of piety and spirituality—in short, the sorts of things that we regularly do in church, though they also extend to our private lives. "Faith" I take to mean something more basic and comprehensive. It is a relationship to God, and a concomitant relationship to other human beings, in which one's whole life is caught up and by which one's character, decisions, and actions are fundamentally affected.

Religion by its very nature is distinguished from other human activities. When we are worshiping, we are not casting a vote or earning a buck (at least, not usually). Faith, on the other hand, cannot be so compartmentalized. It reaches out and invades all dimensions of our lives. It is pervasive, insistent, and often troublesome; it may intrude where it is not wanted.



Of course, being Christian includes being religious, but religiousness is a human capacity or inclination which is not confined to Christians. As with other human capacities, it varies in intensity from one person to another. In this respect, I think the rabbi was right. Some of us have greater aptitude for religion than others.

Even more, religiousness is not the *only* measure, and indeed not the most *significant* measure, of the genuineness or depth of one's faith. We usually assume that those of greatest faith will also be the most religious among us. The Bible challenges this notion. Both the Old and New Testaments show that it is dangerous to identify faith too closely or exclusively with religion, and that the most religious persons may be the most faithless. A few references will make the point.

We can start with the words of our text from the prophet Amos:

I hate, I despise your festivals,  
and I take no delight in your solemn  
assemblies.  
Even though you offer me your burnt  
offerings and grain offerings,  
I will not accept them . . . .  
Take away from me the noise of your  
songs,  
But let justice roll down like waters,  
and righteousness like an ever-flowing  
stream. (Amos 5:21-24)

We could add many passages from Old Testament prophets, but one crucial passage is the familiar one from Micah:

With what shall I come before the Lord,  
and bow myself before God on high?  
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,  
with calves a year old?  
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,  
with ten thousand rivers of oil?

That is, will the Lord be pleased with the equipment of formal ritual, the exercises of religion? No:

He has told you, O mortal, what is good;  
and what does the Lord require of you

But to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God?  
(Mic. 6:6-8)

According to reports in the Gospels, Jesus carried on this prophetic tradition in his resounding and unsparing criticisms of those who confined faith to religious practices and did not see its implications for the rest of their living and action. He saw such "faith" as not only incomplete but downright dishonest and hypocritical.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,  
hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill,  
and cummin, and have neglected the weightier  
matters of the law: justice and mercy and  
faith (Mt. 23:23).

(You) devour widows' houses and for the  
sake of appearance say long prayers (Mk. 12:40).

These persons had observed scrupulously all the religious laws and forms but had forgotten the word of the Lord: "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice" (Mt. 12:7). Thus they had become morally blind and hypocritical, "blind guides, straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel." They were people who "cleanse the outside of the cup and plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence" (Mt. 23:24-25).

Such scriptural passages clearly imply that faith goes beyond religion and invades the secular dimensions of our lives. Amos told his people that while God cared about the purity of worship, God also cared at least as much about the plight of the poor who were being "trample[d] into the dust of the earth" and sold "for a pair of sandals" (Amos 2:6-7). Isaiah proclaimed that God cared about those who were being dispossessed of their land by monopolists who "add field to field until there is no more room" for others (Is. 5:8). Such things were what the prophets, and Jesus, had in mind when they appealed beyond religion to "justice" and "mercy" and "faith." How can we avoid the call to social action if we really care, as God cares, about people who are being treated unjustly and uncaringly? How can we deny our Christian calling to try to reform any social system that oppresses our fellow human beings?

Yet in spite of such warnings, we still have a tendency to identify faith with religion and to condemn efforts to address larger social issues. In a recent issue of *Christianity and Crisis* (Sept. 24, 1990), Dr. Dieter Hessel com-

ments on the claim, being made by many today, that the decline in membership of our mainline churches is due to their involvement in social action and the positions they have taken on public issues. Such actions, the critics say, "detract from the churches' spiritual or religious focus." Those of us who are committed to social action but are also concerned about the loss of membership may feel defensive, and even a bit guilty, in response to that judgment.

Whether the judgment is sound or not (Dr. Hessel thinks not), in fact it obscures the main point. *Faith itself involves social responsibility and we cannot be the church if we deny or avoid it.* Further, denial of it renders all our religion null and void, however assiduously we practice it.

All this leads to three conclusions:

1. While faith without religion is deficient, religion without faith is defective.
2. While we all want to reverse our churches' decline in membership, we cannot try to do this at the cost of betraying the gospel and our biblically based Christian faith.
3. If we do betray this faith, our religion itself will be rejected by God. "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice" (Hos. 6:6).

## Memorial Minute

JAMES HASTINGS NICHOLS  
(January 18, 1915-May 3, 1991)

ON THE wall of the Office of the Academic Dean when James H. Nichols was the incumbent, there hung a framed cross-stitched message, which in a quiet way dominated the room. It seemed to set the tone. The text was from Calvin's *Institutes* and it read,

"We are not our own: let not our reason nor our will, therefore, sway our plans and deeds. We are not our own: let us therefore not set it as our goal to seek what is expedient for us according to the flesh. We are not our own: insofar as we can, let us therefore forget ourselves and all that is ours.

"Conversely, we are God's: let us therefore live for him and die for him. We are God's: let His wisdom and will therefore rule all our actions. We are God's: let all parts of our life accordingly strive toward him as our only lawful goal."

These words sum up the faith, the discipline, and the integrity which characterized the life of James Hastings Nichols.

Jim Nichols was modest and self-effacing to a fault. He taught, he administered, he served, but he did not dominate. He apparently gave no inaugural address as Professor of Modern Church History at Princeton Seminary. If he did, we have no record of it. There are few letters in the files which show him persuading or impressing his ideas on others. His published writings are factual, analytical, and inquiring. One must search beneath the words to find the depth of his wisdom and the power of his fundamental convictions. He was a quiet man, a master of judicious understatement. Yet for a generation, he led the field of modern church history and for a decade he guided the academic programs of Princeton Seminary into the shape and substance they enjoy today.

James Hastings Nichols was born in Auburn, New York on January 18, 1915, where his father was professor at Auburn Theological Seminary. He earned his bachelor's degree at Yale in 1936, a master's degree at Harvard in 1937, and his Ph.D. in church history, again from Yale in 1941. He held honorary degrees from Franklin and Marshall College, from Monmouth College in Illinois, and from Keuka College in New York State. His teaching career began at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1940. In 1943 he moved to the Divinity School of the University of Chicago where

he taught until 1962. He was appointed Professor of the History of Christianity in 1955.

It was during this period that his reputation as a scholar in modern church history was established. In 1943 he published a translation of Jacob Burckhardt's *Force and Freedom*. In 1947 appeared the popular ecumenical handbook, *Primer for Protestants*. This was followed in 1951 by *Democracy and the Churches*, in 1954 by *Evanston: An Interpretation* about the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches and in 1956 by the definitive textbook which has nourished a whole generation of students: *The History of Christianity, 1650-1950. Romanticism in American Theology, Nevin and Schaff at Mercersburg* appeared in 1961. He was also editor during these years of the journal, *Church History*.

In 1962 James Nichols joined Princeton Theological Seminary's faculty as Mary McIntosh Bridge Professor of Modern Church History. His academic production continued. He was chairman of the Editorial Board of the Presbyterian Historical Society. *Presbyterianism in New York State*, written with his father Robert Hastings Nichols, appeared in 1963. An edited volume of Mercersburg Theology came out in 1966, *Corporate Worship in the Reformed Tradition* in 1968, and, with John T. McNeill *Ecumenical Theology: The Concern for Christian Unity within the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches* in 1974. He was an official observer on behalf of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to the Second Vatican Council.

Jim Nichols, however, was best known among us as a teacher and as academic dean. He was the first to give shape to CH 02, the basic course in church history since the Reformation. His advanced courses explored Catholic as well as Protestant developments in the centuries immediately preceding ours, and he did not stop there. One of his most popular and provocative offerings was *Nineteenth Century Opponents of Christianity: Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche, and their companions*. But it was as dean that his influence on us was deepest. Under his guidance the new curriculum, instituted in 1964, took shape and has guided us down to the present. The Ph.D. program developed the structure which it has today from admissions procedures to dissertation requirements. The Seminary began to move seriously toward a diversified faculty and a curriculum that took more seriously the concerns of women, of minorities, and of international students. Jim Nichols was not an activist or crusader. Concern for academic standards and integrity was fundamental to his policies and his judgment. Yet carefully, step-by-step, and person-by-person, his office opened the way for the Seminary



to find and bring the students and faculty who would open the Seminary to the challenges in the years ahead. We live with this heritage today.

Jim Nichols seldom allowed the bedrock of his own convictions through the soil of historical scholarship. Once in a while, however, he did so. Let this minute close with two illustrations.

One is from the chapter on the Twentieth Century Ecumenical Movement in his *History of Christianity*. He compared it with the church councils of the fifteenth century, also a time of secularization when nationalism had broken the unity of Christendom and the church's social ethic seemed unable to keep up with the rise of finance, commerce, and industry, and when respect for ecclesiastical leadership was low. The difference, he suggested, was that in the mid-twentieth century, "Bourgeois Protestantism seemed increasingly unable to provide meaning and direction for an industrial society, and a widespread desire was felt for a more direct theonomous relation between Christian faith and political, economic, and cultural practice than was provided by the evangelical appeal to the 'moral law.' There was a widespread sense that an age was past and that Christians must seek new ways of recovering genuine Christian community and an integrity of personal life. The conviction was general that all were in schism and that all were outrageously unfaithful to Christ in the common life."

"The task of the ecumenical movement was more to relate the churches to the One Church and its Lord than simply to each other. Amsterdam reflected much of this insight. But as the ecumenical movement passed into the official hands of ecclesiastical bureaucracy, how much could be hoped of such a vision."

"It remained to be seen whether the ecumenical movement of the twentieth century would have more success than its predecessor of the fifteenth."

The other illustration is closer to home. In the spring of 1970, the Princeton Seminary campus exploded with protest against the invasion of Cambodia and the Vietnam War. The semester came to a disorderly end as study gave way to demonstration. In the fall of that year, Jim Nichols stood before the incoming class and quoted to them words from a Roman Catholic seminary dean of a few years before, "You are here to prove you have a vocation. We are here to prove you do not." Then he qualified both sides of this antithesis. To the students: "Your vocation is part of your believing, what you trust, what you are willing to stand for, what you are willing to serve. In your exploration you will test, we hope, among other things whether it is to the ministry of Jesus Christ that you are personally called." And of the faculty: "You will find many of them actually helpful and friendly. But they

will not sustain you through seminary on a high plane of religious inspiration and ecstasy. They will test you and make you prove your vocation in relation to a community of ordinary people, with much routine, considerable dullness, and apparent irrelevance and some hard work. The question will be whether your vocational purpose has sufficient sturdiness and tenacity to endure this probation. If not, how could you ever discern and obey the work of God's spirit in the ordinariness, the routine, the apparent irrelevance of the church?"

And then he concluded, "But we do make the working hypothesis that five years from now there will be communities of Christian people looking to men and women like you for help in their recognition of, and a response to, the presence of God in their lives and the world. And surely as you seek to test your vocation, here is the first question. What is the 'good news' you have discovered about God or that has discovered itself to you and demands to be made known?"

James Hastings Nichols, our mentor and our colleague, our teacher and our dean.

—Prepared by Professor Charles C. West  
and presented by him at the faculty meeting  
on May 15, 1991

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Miller, Patrick D. *Deuteronomy*. Interpretation Commentary Series. Louisville: John Knox, 1990. Pp. 253. \$21.95.

Patrick D. Miller, the Charles T. Haley Professor of Old Testament Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, has an established reputation as an interpreter of the Old Testament committed to theological pertinence as well as to historical-critical rigor. As the Old Testament editor of the series in which his commentary appears, one expects the volume to exemplify the aspirations of a series which seeks to present scholarly biblical interpretation in a form useful for the ministry of the church. These expectations are not disappointed.

The theological focus of the volume emerges in the first section of the introduction. The author employs the various names given to Deuteronomy by different interpretive communities to discuss the canonical placement of the book and its essential theological emphases. Likewise, discussions of setting and authorship, while presenting mainstream critical theories, nevertheless outline the contribution of each historical-critical insight to theological exposition. Detractors tempted to fault the author for apparently accepting simultaneously the theories of Nicholson, von Rad, and Weinfeld on the origin of Deuteronomy should reflect on the possibility that the book's complex history of development could well have included a series of creative communities. This long process of development also allows the author to formulate theological applications arising from three historical audiences: the Hebrews in the wilderness, who are surely the most neglected audience; the Judeans in the late pre-exilic period; and the exiles in Babylon. Again, most commentaries, in treating structure, are torn between Deuteronomy's reflection of the structure of ancient Near Eastern treaties and the editorial division of the book into speeches of Moses, a division often cutting across elements of the treaty structure. The author again interrelates these variant descriptions of the book's content, making their positive contributions to interpretation accessible without forcing an either-or decision.

The exposition operates at the level of the longer segment of approximately a chapter, developing the themes of each segment, with technical textual issues emerging only when necessary. The exegesis is proportionately most extensive in chapters 5-11, and here the author is at his best. The discussion of the Decalogue, and especially of the Sabbath commandment, is rich both in textual insight and theological incisiveness. Pastors preaching a series on the Ten Commandments (do such exist anymore?) will find here a stimulus for fresh proclamation of the Torah. At times the author's language resonates with the lyrical, passionate exhortation of the book itself. The treatment of the section of laws (chapters 12-26) likewise offers useful insights, particularly in chapters 12-18, which treat the structure of the Israelite community. Miller relies heavily on S. Dean McBride's analysis of Deuteron-

omy as an actual constitution for Israel, and the result is an exposition of Deuteronomy attuned to the book as a rule of faith shaping the life of the people of God. This reviewer found the exposition of chapters 29-34 somewhat less penetrating than the rest of the commentary. For example, the alternation in chapter 31 between the themes of Moses' personal successor, Joshua, and his written successor, the book of the law, is lost by commenting on the respective passages collectively. Theological concerns can overshadow significant historical and religious issues in the text, however, as might be the case when Christ's universal lordship is seen in Deut. 32:8-9, a text which has been read by some as treating the "Most High" and Yahweh as different entities, the latter being depicted as in some way subordinate to the former. One cannot expect a full and necessarily technical discussion of so notoriously difficult a passage in a non-technical commentary.

Two other features of the commentary enhance its usefulness. First, the author recognizes the pivotal place of Moses in Deuteronomy and offers excurses on Moses as suffering servant, teacher, intercessor, and teacher of the Law. Second, readers concerned with gender issues will appreciate Miller's complete avoidance of masculine pronouns in reference to God, while stylistic purists will find awkwardness resulting from this practise in only a few spots (e.g., "The purpose of God to discipline the Lord's own people," on p. 234). True to the purpose of the series in which it appears, this commentary provides excellent resources for teaching and preaching informed by responsible exegesis.

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Cousar, Charles B. *A Theology of the Cross: The Death of Jesus in the Pauline Letters*. Overtures to Biblical Theology 24. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990. Pp. xiv + 194. \$11.95.

In the 1960s and 70s an important corpus of literature on the "theology of the cross" and the meaning of the death of Jesus was produced by New Testament scholars in Germany. Only scattered portions of this literature have been available in English to American readers, most notably in the April 1970 issue of *Interpretation* (24:131-242) and in one of the essays by Ernst Käsemann, a dominant participant in the discussion (*Perspectives on Paul* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971], 32-59). In the book under review, Charles Cousar, the Samuel A. Cartledge Professor of New Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary, taking his departure from that debate, broadens the range of the discussion in the light of subsequent publications, deepens it by his own careful thought on the subject, and reorients it for churches in North America today. The result is an exceptionally valuable book, clearly written, informative about the current state of Pauline studies, and rich in material for theological reflection and preaching.

Cousar examines in turn all the major passages from Paul's letters that refer to

the death of Jesus, analyzing the function of each in its context, the issues in Paul's churches to which each is directed, the claims each makes, and the language and imagery each employs. This examination is succinct and clear. The footnotes are filled with valuable references to ancillary literature, brief descriptions of alternative interpretations, and helpful comments on Greek words and phrases crucial to the discussion. All this makes the book a perceptive guide to the exegesis of many of the most central, but also most vigorously debated, primary texts in Pauline theology.

Although conscientiously attentive to the historical and literary context of each passage, Cousar does not follow their canonical or chronological order; instead, he arranges them thematically so that each chapter forms a theologically coherent whole around some aspect of Paul's theology of the cross, as a brief listing shows. Chapter 1 focuses on passages that refer to Jesus' death in terms of God's action and intention (1 Cor. 1:18-2:5; Rom. 3:21-26; 5:6-8); it then summarizes the ways in which Jesus' death shapes Paul's understanding of God's power, righteousness, wisdom, faithfulness, freedom, and love and identifies the challenges that Paul raises for the traditional or "classic" Christian treatments of these divine "attributes." Chapter 2 examines texts that relate Jesus' death to human salvation (Rom. 3:24-26; 4:24-25; 6:1-11; 2 Cor. 5:14-6:2) and draws the consequences for assessing historic views of the atonement. Chapter 3 pursues the issue of the relationship of Jesus' resurrection to his death (1 Cor. 15). Chapter 4 turns to ways in which the cross defines for Paul the identity of the people of God (Gal. 3; 1 Cor. 11:17-34; 5:1-13) and sketches the results for a doctrine of the church. Chapter 5 reviews texts in which the death of Jesus shapes the apostle's understanding of himself and his own experience and thus provides him with paradigms for authentic life on the part of every individual believer (Gal. 6:11-18; 2 Cor. 4:7-15; Phil. 3:2-11; and, 2 Cor. 13:1-4). A conclusion distills from this review some of the resources Paul's theology of the cross supplies for confronting the identity crisis of the Christian community in North America today.

Many of these texts have come to be recognized as containing traditional creedal and liturgical formulations from the earliest stages of Christian reflection on the meaning of Jesus' death. Departing from Käsemann's more redaction-critical approach, which sharply distinguished between such pre-Pauline traditions and Paul's own views, Cousar argues that Paul uses these traditions and the death of Jesus in a variety of ways, not only negatively to correct dangerous deviation from the gospel but also positively to nurture and to guide. The result is to demonstrate the richly diverse roles of the crucifixion in the letters. This requires of Paul's interpreters a broad and flexible "theology of the cross," which, in turn, addresses more comprehensively the church and the human community in their present condition. One may argue with Cousar here and there over some details of exegesis; for example, the relative weight to be assigned to the images of representation and substitution in Paul's language about the delivering effect of Jesus' death. But the issues and



materials for such further conversation are all supplied in this instructive and thoughtful book.

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Brueggemann, Walter. *First and Second Samuel*. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990. Pp. 362. \$24.95.

Modern commentaries on 1 and 2 Samuel have typically concentrated on historical (Mayes, Soggin), text-critical (McBride), or redactional (Noth) issues. Walter Brueggemann's addition to the Interpretation commentary series signals a fresh literary and theological approach to 1 and 2 Samuel which builds upon recent emphases on literary and final form interpretations of biblical narratives. Brueggemann's characteristic attention to the artfulness of the biblical narrative, his passion for the realism of the Bible in matters of faith and socio-political life, and his theological sensitivity combine in this work to provide an excellent and fruitful resource for preaching and teaching the narratives about Samuel, Saul, and David.

The narratives of 1 and 2 Samuel lead us through the birthpains of drastic social transformation as ancient Israel moved from a marginal company of tribes to becoming a centralized royal state. The Samuel narratives hold together three distinct factors at work in this radical reconfiguration of power and politics: the influence of political and social pressures and technological possibilities, the extraordinary and powerful personality of David, and the sometimes overt but more often hidden activity of Yahweh, the God who sought to shape Israel's future. For Brueggemann, "the strategic requirement of the Samuel literature is to find a way of speaking about the tension, overlap, juxtaposition, and convergence of these three forces" (p. 2). Brueggemann succeeds in finding a way to hold these political, personal, and theological factors together, even as the theological dimension is clearly the most important element for his interpretation (e.g., p. 163). The format of the commentary is a continuous narrative interpretation of every section of 1 and 2 Samuel which accentuates the narrative integrity and poetic artfulness of the final form of the biblical text.

Three features of Brueggemann's commentary warrant comment. First of all, Brueggemann retells and interprets the biblical narratives by consistently using present tense verbs. King David becomes our contemporary. The commentary thus easily spills over into reflections on contemporary politics and faith. Brueggemann knows there are many differences between our world and that of ancient Israel. But he is rightly insistent that these narratives about war and politics and lust and jealousy strike close to home not only in ancient Israel but also to "us" who stand at the end of the twentieth century.

Second, Brueggemann's interpretations often belie the deconstructive tendency which is part of the current scene of biblical interpretation. We can no longer claim



that a given biblical text has only one definitive meaning. Rather, the meanings of texts (at least to some extent) depend on the assumptions and locations of the readers or interpreters of that text. Thus, Brueggemann frequently will list interpretive options as to what a text may mean without deciding one way or the other, saying things like "perhaps," "we are left to ponder," "the narrator leaves these two options open," or "this is a possible reading" (pp. 117, 168, 278, 336). It is this open-ended feature which may be striking to those who look to commentaries for definitive answers and solutions. Brueggemann raises for us the question of the function or goal of a commentary. We can no longer expect commentaries to provide the singular cast-in-stone meaning of texts which a preacher or teacher then applies. Rather, commentaries ought to evoke, offer interpretive options, stimulate the reader's imagination, and open up texts in new ways, allowing the text to ask probing questions without prematurely offering easy answers. Commentaries should be a catalyst and not a replacement for the interpreter's own encounter with the biblical text itself.

Third, although often respecting the real tensions and open-ended character of the Samuel narratives, Brueggemann is not frozen in undecidability about the main currents of these texts. He "sins boldly" by insisting on the integrity of the text's claim about Yahweh's real presence woven in and through the concrete and often soiled tapestry of Israel's political life and leadership. In Brueggemann's words, the texts are filled with examples of the "word becoming flesh" (p. 258). The most extreme case may be the important text of 2 Samuel 7 and Nathan's oracle to David of an eternal dynasty. Here self-seeking royal propaganda becomes at the same time "the Bible's best theology of grace and messianism" (p. 258). It is this interplay of evocative open-endedness and definitive proclamations about central theological themes in Samuel which is the strength of this commentary.

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John H. Leith. *From Generation to Generation: The Renewal of the Church According to Its Own Theology and Practice*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990. Pp. 223. \$14.95.

The French often employ the verb *engager* (i.e., "to engage" to "to involve") when persons participate in spirited and unrestrained discourse. Such *engagement*, bristling with polemics, is the tone and mood of this book. Written originally for the Annie Kinkead Warfield Lectures in 1989 at Princeton Theological Seminary, John Leith (Pemberton Professor of Theology at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia) senses that the contemporary Presbyterian Church (USA) is foundering. "The thesis of this book," he says in the Preface, "is that the crisis in the church is theological . . ." (p. 10). Presbyterians are, he repeatedly asserts, a church at risk because their theological commitments are awry. He hopes this book will

help make the Presbyterians' meandering ways straight. As he says in the Epilogue, "The only claim that is made here is that the pattern of the church life advocated has been tested in the actual experience of the pastorate and is quantifiably effective. It is also claimed that it is in agreement with the theological tradition of the [Presbyterian] church" (p. 179).

*From Generation to Generation*, then, is an *engagement* of an ardent partisan of the Presbyterian church and therein lies both its strength and foibles. Like most champions, Leith is confident of his analyses and prescriptions. None can doubt his affections or erudition, though not all will agree with the way he defines and assesses the causes of the crises in the current Presbyterian (USA) community.

Leith contends that the contemporary Presbyterian Church (USA) has forsaken (to use Jeremiah's metaphor) the sound cisterns of the Reformed tradition and hewn out for itself cracked, leaky cisterns that hold little. "In seeking to accommodate Christian faith to modernity the church may well have encouraged unbelief" (p. 14). Such a choice, writes Leith, is compounded by the denomination's deference toward secularist sociological surveys (read: Wade Clark Roof, Robert Wuthnow, Jeffery H. Hadden, *et. al.*) and the simultaneous neglect of the wisdom from its own tradition (read: Augustine, Calvin, the Reformation Confessions, English Puritans, Hodge, and Barth). "Traditioning the faith is an awesome responsibility on the one hand to incorporate each new person and generation into the community of faith and on the other hand to do so in a self-critical way, which maintains the faith without distortion, dilution or corruption" (p. 37). The Presbyterians are currently failing on both assignments, or so he claims.

Central to Leith's concerns and agenda is his assessment of the nature and calling of the ministry and ministers. He contends that many contemporary Presbyterian clergy have forgotten (or abandoned) their cardinal responsibilities: (1) to preach the gospel so others come into faith; (2) to teach the gospel, so others can interpret their faith; and (3) to pastor in such a way that others can renew their faith. Three spirited chapters on these clergy-based ministries constitute the heart of the book.

Clearly, this is *not* another clergy-bashing book by an academic. Rather, Leith passionately argues why these three functions, assigned by the Reformed tradition to the clergy, belong to the *esse* (rather than just the *bene esse*) of the church. Through these three functions the gospel is usually experienced by the people of God. The gospel alone—not secularized research ("empirical sciences," p. 161) nor even Presbyterian polity—renews the human heart and builds congregations.

Leith believes these essential tasks for "traditioning" the gospel are being preempted in the clergy by their pluralistic theological commitments, excessive programmatic excursions, and debilitating denominational structures. (He often scolds the denomination's "bureaucratism" mentality and its inordinate appetite to regulate via an ever-expanding *Book of Order*.) Leith further contends that many contemporary Presbyterian clergy have lost their confidence in the gospel's redemptive efficacy in preaching, teaching, and pastoring. Such clergy, he fears, reflect the "un-

ease" (his word) of the contemporary church's bland theology for evangelism and mission (p. 176), and he fervently hopes this book will help stem the tide of Presbyterian confusion and despair.

Leith, then, unearths many smoldering issues in the Presbyterian Church (USA). But his particular understanding of the "The Church and Ministry" (Chapter Two) gives this reviewer, also a former pastor, some pause. When one tallies his many recommendations, Leith's ideal clergyperson reminds me of Milton's famed comment that the "new Presbyterian was the old Priest writ large." Maybe the crisis in the Reformed churches is not whether clergy should or should not lead congregations in ministry but *how* they should lead and *with* whom? Second, Leith's assigned role of the laity in the *essential ministries* of the church is either obscure or non-existent. Whatever happened in the Reformed tradition to that Pauline vision of equipping "the saints for the work of ministry"?

Beyond Leith, I would maintain that there are some hard questions about ministry and clergy which contemporary Reformed theologians are ducking. For starters, are the grace-gifts (charismata) of the Holy Spirit—which Leith agrees are absolutely essential for effective ministry—given to all the people of God or are they deposited only in clergypersons? Are the church's ministries of proclaiming, interpreting, and caring the exclusive possession and responsibility of the clergy? Might not the New Testament be understood to teach that such indispensable Spirit-gifts are located extensively in the congregation? If so, what then is the role of clergy and what would congregation life become if all believers were engaged in *essential* ministries? Could it be that authentic renewal in the contemporary Presbyterian Church (USA) requires something more (though not less!) than what Leith calls for?

Many of us also care passionately about this denomination's future. We are grateful for seasoned teachers like John Leith who prod us to examine carefully how Christ's ministry can be shaped for the twenty-first century. To that end, *From Generation to Generation* is a worthy and engaging beginning.

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Köbler, Renate. *In the Shadow of Karl Barth: Charlotte von Kirschbaum*. Trans. Keith Crim. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989. Pp. 156. \$11.95.

No one who knew Charlotte von Kirschbaum could fail to appreciate Renate Köbler's attempt to celebrate her indispensable role in one of the greatest theological achievements in the history of the church. Without her, Barth would still have been a great theologian, but he certainly could not have produced a theological corpus of such breath-taking scope—altogether about twice the size of his massive *Church Dogmatics*.

Charlotte von Kirschbaum (b. 1899) was the daughter of a German General

killed in the First World War. The family had little money and so she chose nursing as a way to earn her living. While still in nursing school she discovered Barth's theology, met him in 1924 through a mutual friend, and soon became part of his inner circle. Her comments and suggestions about his lectures and essays were such that Barth saw in her a useful assistant. To prepare herself for that role Charlotte undertook secretarial training as well as classes in theology and Latin. Her participation in Barth's life and work increased steadily and in 1929 she moved into the Barth home. Barth would compose during the day and Charlotte would stay up half the night typing his text in time for his early morning lecture. Thus the *Church Dogmatics* came into being day by day, page by page.

Charlotte was Barth's receptionist, secretary, book-keeper, travel agent and companion, research assistant, editor, and conversation partner. In the midst of all that she was able to write one small book, several articles and a few speeches—two of which are included in this volume. As Barth's energies failed, so did hers. Afflicted by something like Alzheimer's disease, she was moved to a sanitarium in 1965, three years before Barth's death, and died in 1975, after what Köbler rightly calls a "long, slow, departure." She was buried beside Barth, with the agreement of Barth's wife, Nelly, who followed them there one year later.

Köbler's subject-matter is important and her intention laudable. Her book, however, is premature, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Her research simply did not produce enough material to justify its publication. Of the book's 156 pages, only 40 can be assigned to the author, when one discounts the half-page top margins and photographs with which Westminster has fluffed her text. Of those pages (originally a seminar paper written at Marburg) few contain information not already available in Busch's authoritative biography of Barth.

The method and logic of this book everywhere betray the author's inexperience. Little documentary evidence is offered for very questionable assertions regarding von Kirschbaum's income, status, and participation in Barth's work. Instead, Köbler depends largely upon anecdotal recollections of events and conversations more than half a century old, gained, more often than not, through telephone interviews. Köbler believes that Charlotte von Kirschbaum was an underpaid and unappreciated intellectual and sexual victim. To persuade the reader that Charlotte has been denied credit for actually writing important portions of Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, she must have recourse to some of the most astonishing non sequiturs I have seen in print. From Barth's words of appreciation of his assistant in the preface to CD III/3, Köbler leaps to the conclusion that she essentially wrote ("prepared") the excurses, (the sections of small print), which were merely "discussed between the two" before being published. That is absurd. No one who reads the *Church Dogmatics* with any attention can fail to see that the excurses contain some of Barth's most subtle and characteristic prose.

As to sexual victimization, Köbler here stamps about where many more qualified have feared to tread—and I suspect it is this aspect of her essay that attracted the



publishers. Even in theology, "Inquiring minds want to know." Köbler selects words and phrases from her interviews which suggest an on-going sexual relation between Barth and his assistant—although her sources are careful never to assert such a thing. From my acquaintance with the persons involved, I am convinced that *if* at some early point a romance developed between Barth and Charlotte, that aspect of their relationship must have been set aside in favor of both family and theological responsibilities, for how else could Frau Barth have tolerated Charlotte's presence? How else could the children have accepted and loved "Aunt Lollo?" How else could Barth have believed and written what he did about marriage and the family? How else could they all have been the disciplined, committed persons they were?

One must applaud Renate Köbler's desire to rescue the life and work of Charlotte von Kirschbaum from obscurity, but by portraying her as a victim she thrusts her even deeper into the shadows. To insist that Charlotte was something of a co-author of the *Church Dogmatics* constitutes a rejection of the historic importance of her actual work as Barth's *assistant*. To cast her in the role of an exploited victim denies her the dignity of the life of sacrifice she joyfully embraced.

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Nichols, J. Randall. *Ending Marriage, Keeping Faith*. New York: Crossroad, 1991. Pp. 216. \$17.95.

Every pastor knows that the subject of divorce is one of the most difficult encountered in ministry. When it comes, divorce is almost invariably presented as a tightly compressed knot of experiences including pain, guilt, and anger often causing fear, immobilization, and the feeling that the self has been lost. While we all seek guidance for our ministry to people in the midst of divorce, we often suspect that ultimately there can be no guidance, so conflicting are the theological, biblical, and behavioral points of view on this subject. What this book does is to relax the knot and decompress the experience by lengthening it and pulling it apart thereby revealing all (it seems) of the important pieces. This makes it possible to navigate through the complex of subtleties and ambiguities to a new way of experiencing life's journey in the context of divorce.

The book begins with a new image for understanding the meaning of divorce. In the first chapter entitled "Divorce is Not Something You Get," Nichols argues against the traditional view that healing under these circumstances means achieving a condition where the wounds of the past are forgotten and felt no more. Instead he contends that because divorce is a *process* in the context of the meaning of separation and loss, this means that the process of divorce will be lifelong. How many times have we heard parishioners say: "If I can just get to the other side, I'll be all right." Nichols contends that there is no other side in that traditional sense. Rather, he might say it's a matter of getting a new boat and learning how to navigate it. It



makes perfect sense, of course, given what we know about the dynamics of grief and loss. When someone loses a loved one, we know that real healing will not include some sort of final "forgetting" of the loved one. As in all forms of healing we are never restored to the condition we occupied before we were wounded. Healing means living into a process where we learn to embrace our wounds. In such a process we become new people—people we could not have imagined given our dependence on the past in the structuring of our futures. Divorce is analogous to this because of the complex of losses it represents. What this does is to replace the false hope of reaching some "location" of healing which can only be imagined in terms of the past, with the genuine promise that the lifelong process of divorce as healing can result in a life which is new, renewed, surprising and, yes, sometimes stronger. The location mentality forces a loss of self because it necessarily includes denial. The process mentality renews and recovers the self because it excludes denial.

Pastors in particular will appreciate the chapters on the theological and biblical interpretation of divorce. Perhaps this is because it is here that even we are the most conflicted. Even the most liberal among us often find it difficult to reconcile our behavioral convictions with the biblical witness. Here again, we can be grateful for Nichols' guidance. He argues convincingly and clearly that divorce is not a sin. He sets the context for understanding the biblical view of divorce by pointing out that whenever divorce is mentioned in the Bible, it is always mentioned "in passing" on the way to something else. For evidence, he cites all the places in the Bible where the word divorce appears. All of this paves the way to his conclusion that the Bible has no clear word on divorce. What it *does* have a clear word on, he says, is something far more important: the restoration of broken human beings. In this exceptional insight, all the theological, biblical, and therapeutic sensibilities of the book are joined.

From a theological and practical point of view, Nichols suggests that such restoration comes in the form of a recovered self which is able (as only a recovered self can) to embrace the needs of a partner so that "his or her happiness is of *selfish* importance to ourselves." (Here he is relying on the work of psychologist Nathaniel Branden.) So many books about divorce are so heavily oriented to a "me-first" design that the self remains imprisoned in self-centeredness. This book frees the self to make the most of the divorcing process and to be prepared for whatever lies ahead.

While it is true that Nichols' own divorce was a prime mover in the production of this book, it is no exhibitionist's attempt to proclaim a "successful divorce" to the world. Rather it is the work of a person with a highly refined theological mind, an excellent pastoral sensibility, and well-tuned psychotherapeutic skills whose own divorce finally showed him the picture he had been helping other people to see for years.

It is hard to know whether the book will touch more the souls of divorcing

people or the minds of those who are trying to help them. I am sure, however, that the next time someone (or ones) come to me to talk about divorce, I will say to them, after having established the requisite level of trust, "I have a book I would like you to read and then talk about with me."

DONALD M. MACKENZIE, JR.

The Church of Christ at Dartmouth College

Wimberly, Edward P. *Prayer in Pastoral Counseling: Suffering, Healing and Discernment*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990. Pp. 127. \$10.95.

Edward P. Wimberly, Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, is concerned in this book with how counselor and counselees employ the method of discernment in their counseling work together. By discernment, he means the effort to gain insight into how and in what ways God is at work in the counselees' lives, and, on the basis of this insight, how and in what ways the counselees may align themselves with what God is doing. Through case studies (one involving individual, another marital, and another family counseling), Wimberly illustrates what happens when discernment of God's intentions is made an explicit part of the counseling process. Through prayer and pastoral instruction, Wimberly (the counselor in all three case studies) encouraged his counselees to give serious thought to how God was acting in their lives, and to what they could do differently so as not to frustrate but to enable God's purposes to be realized.

Wimberly found that counselees did not resist, but instead welcomed, such encouragement. Indeed, "How counselees learned to make discernment part of the problem-solving skills in life was a major unanticipated surprise discovery" (p. 124). Why this approach worked probably had something to do with the counselees' predisposition to seek to discern God's role in their lives, but I doubt that such predisposition was sufficient in itself. What made the difference was Wimberly's direct advocacy of this approach (which involved some instruction in its use), and his own modelling of it as he offered his own interpretations of the meanings of changes that were occurring in their lives. Also important was the fact that he was inviting counselees to explore and openly express deep and for the most part previously suppressed feelings of resentment and rage, mainly having to do with how they had been mistreated by one or both parents in childhood. Thus emerged a certain congruence between Wimberly's method of discernment and his method of psychotherapy. The psychotherapeutic method enabled counselees to come to a deeper understanding of why they were experiencing the "presenting problems" that had brought them to counseling. Gaining insight into these destructive patterns formed in childhood facilitated openness to constructive alternatives. That these constructive alternatives were associated with God's intentions is not altogether surprising, for, as Wimberly shows, the very fact that alternatives could be envisioned and entertained was a powerful source of hope. God, in other words, is power-

fully—one might say unquestioningly—identified with hope, and the pastoral counselor's role is to be aligned with those developments in counselees' lives that create hopefulness.

What I especially appreciate about this book is Wimberly's willingness to allow the reader to observe him in the counseling process. He invites the reader to see him in operation, he explains why he did what he did, and he freely admits his perplexity or uncertainty about how to proceed at specific junctures in the counseling process. Because he is self-revealing, he gives the reader ample opportunity for second guessing his counseling style and judgment. He also occasionally reveals more than he intends, as when he tells us that he resolved to risk a counselee's fury by being confrontational and then relates how *she* was the one who became confrontational and *he* responded by being quite non-directive—"You experience me as being critical of you" (pp. 79-80). Still, I think that this willingness to reveal himself is congruent with the major theological theme of the book, i.e., that God is on the side not of concealment and hiding but of disclosure and openness. This theme is, of course, consistent with Christian views of God as self-revealing.

My major dissatisfaction with the book is that it does not address the admittedly difficult problem of discerning God's intentions in situations where the counselees disagree in very deep and fundamental ways on what is the best or most hopeful outcome. In the family counseling case, a decision was reached with which all but one of the family members was in basic accord. While Wimberly believes that this outcome was evidence of "God at work in this process," and that decisions had been made "that I think have been positive," it was not altogether clear to me what were the grounds for deciding that God was working toward the outcome that all but one family member supported, rather than the outcome that the lone holdout seemed to prefer, or some third alternative. Maybe this is why Christians in earlier eras (John Wesley himself comes to mind) resorted to casting lots. As I have much greater confidence in Edward Wimberly than in my own ability to discern the purposes of God, I very much hope that he will address this problem in his next book. In the meantime, he has given us a book that is not only practical and useful, but also one that penetrates to the heart of what is uniquely pastoral in pastoral counseling.

DONALD CAPPS  
Princeton Theological Seminary

*The Confessional Mosaic: Presbyterians and Twentieth-Century Theology*, Milton J. Coalter, John M. Mulder, and Louis B. Weeks, eds. Louisville: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1990. Pp. 333. \$14.95.

This second volume in "The Presbyterian Presence: The Twentieth-Century Experience," the Lilly Endowment project to study American Presbyterianism, will be highly interesting to clergy and laity throughout the church. Nine essays focus

on the PC(USA)'s twentieth-century theology and worship life. Together they portray a "mosaic"—a diverse tapestry of varying trajectories, woven together by some common threads. Theological diversity has raised crucial issues of church identity; pluralist practices have embroiled the church in conflicts. This volume sorts out some strands and gives perspectives on the denomination's posture for the new century.

Presbyterian views of the authority and interpretation of the Bible are addressed by Jack Rogers and Donald McKim in "Pluralism and Policy in Presbyterian Views of Scripture." Overwhelmingly, Presbyterians are "centrist" on the authority and inspiration of scripture. Yet this has not yielded agreement on matters of biblical interpretation. The 1988 Pluralism report, "Is Christ Divided?," acknowledged the Bible's own pluriformity. In the late 1980s, family and gender moral issues were divisive. Scripture was quoted on all sides, but there was no common consensus on how scripture's authority functioned or its appropriate interpretation.

The church's understanding of itself as a confessional church is examined in James Moorhead's essay on "Redefining Confessionalism." For sixty years the church has had growing tolerance for plurality as well as an emerging understanding of the nature of confessionalism. The church has "emphasized dynamic conceptions of truth, has eschewed narrowly propositional understandings of theology, and has increasingly identified the secular world as the arena in which it must define its faith." Moorhead believes this movement coupled with "the crumbling of moral consensus in the larger culture" leaves the church "destined to recapitulate within its own life the divisions of the culture and that its theology will enjoy no sanctuary from the painful process."

Complementary essays on preaching by John McClure (on the UPCUSA) and Beverly Ann Zink (on the PCUS) trace changes in the authority, method, and message of preachers in the two traditions. For McClure, "the messages of the Presbyterian pulpit in the twentieth century are characterized by theological conflict, pluralism, and more recently by what seems to be incoherence and inconsistent theological content." Zink sees more continuous patterns in southern Presbyterian preaching with stresses on spiritual regeneration and maintaining the "spirituality of the church."

Presbyterian worship and hymnody resources are examined by Ronald P. Byars and Morgan F. Simmons. The resources show ways the denomination reflected and participated in the twentieth century's emerging ecumenism. Yet, the resources also maintained, to greater or lesser degrees, distinctive dimensions of the Reformed heritage and tradition. Pastors particularly will be helped to broader perspectives by these pieces.

New orientations toward piety are perceived by Mark A. Noll and Darryl G. Hart who study Presbyterian devotional literature. A "modern devotion," reflected in many books from the denominational presses, shows marked differences from traditional devotional language and practice. These have taken an "inward turn



and become spiritual manuals of self-help." Yet at the same time, more traditional materials continue to appear. The authors see this dialogue of pieties as raising crucial questions of Reformed identity.

Practices of piety are detailed in Benton Johnson's essay on social issues. The number of UPCUSA General Assembly statements on social issues "vastly" increased through the century, particularly after 1965. Until the late 1960s, the denomination's "new agenda" closely paralleled the political positions of American political liberalism. But cultural unrest in the later sixties led to more aggressive attitudes and actions. In the PCUS, the movement was slower, partly because of the "spirituality of the church" doctrine. Today, the range of the church's social concerns is impressive. But, Johnson concludes, the church needs to develop "a third agenda aimed at revitalizing itself as a religious institution and to assign this task a very high priority in the critical period just ahead."

Rick Nutt writes on the origins of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), a birth generated to counter the new social agendas southern conservatives saw as corrupting the church. Ironically however, after the PCA was formed, the denomination itself, by involvement in conservative special interest groups, became "politically" oriented and a participant in "secular agendas"—the very trends it disdained in the PCUS.

The material in this volume gives us much to ponder. As the editors indicate, the expansive theological pluralism of the church has widened its vision; yet the church "still lacks a commonly accepted, overarching design to harmonize the parts into a whole." The plurality that is full of promise can also portend an unraveling into future divisions. The essays indicate this assessment is exactly right.

DONALD K. MCKIM  
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*Calvin's Institutes: A New Compend*, Hugh T. Kerr, ed. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989. Pp. 192. \$12.95.

The indefatigable Hugh T. Kerr is beyond all criticism here; but it is somewhat surprising that this new digest of Calvin's *Institutes* has taken thirty years to appear. The 1960 McNeill and Battles edition of the *Institutes* (Library of Christian Classics, vols. XX and XXI) offered so splendid a modern translation, so magisterial a critical apparatus, as to eclipse quickly all previous English versions—including that of John Allen, dating back to 1813, which previously had been the standard text in this country and the basis of Kerr's original *Compend of Calvin's Institutes*, first published in 1939. One might, perhaps, have expected to see a reworking of the *Compend*, adopting the new translation, soon after McNeill and Battles gained the ascendancy. It is, of course, a telling tribute to the achievement of the original version, brilliantly conceived and executed by Kerr at the very beginning of his teaching



career, that it has remained constantly in demand and in print for fifty years, despite the long displacement of the translation on which it is based.

In the fullness of time, however, a new compendium, incorporating Ford Lewis Battles' translation, has indeed appeared; and what a worthy successor it is. For the most part, the same selections from Calvin's text have been made, with some adjustments which add to the clarity and flow of the abridgement. These bring out all the more clearly Kerr's skill in knowing exactly when to break off from the full text and when to return to it, creating the least possible sensation of disjointedness. To this reader the sheer smoothness of the truncated text (10% of the whole), is a literary wonder.

As before, a guiding principle of selection has been the elimination of Calvin's belligerently anti-Catholic passages and more obscure and obsolete disputations in favor of his positive affirmations of the faith. But by no means has everything difficult and controversial been excised. On the contrary, the very process of textual pruning exposes all the more clearly Calvin's provocative wrestling with matters like the bondage of the will, human depravity, and double predestination.

In his new introduction, the editor honestly addresses the problem of non-inclusive language. Though outstanding in other respects, the Battles translation already jars the contemporary ear with the dominant masculinity of its language. Yet that accurately represents Calvin's own thoughts and words; and Kerr's courageous decision not to meddle with the translation, but let Calvin speak his own language, is a healthy corrective to the fashion for rewriting historical events and texts to make them fit the canons and concerns of the latest moment.

In fact, this new condensation re-attests the abiding significance of Calvin's *magnum opus* on its own historical grounds. Some today question the continued elevation of the *Institutes* as a semi-normative exposition of Reformed theology. To be sure, even the final, 1559, edition needs to be much supplemented with the *Commentaries* for a full accounting of Calvin's teaching; and, of course, this work is no less historically-conditioned than the great dogmatic texts of Reformed Orthodoxy, which can claim to be equally significant milestones along the trajectory of an evolving Calvinist tradition. Even so, can the *Institutes* really be challenged historically as the "classic" of early Reformed doctrine? This grand attempt to think through the substance of the gospel, in conversation with the Fathers and medieval Doctors, but above all in obedience to the authoritative word of scripture, surely offers permanent stimulation and disturbance to those who renew faith's struggle for understanding in later generations.

The ultimate test of the *New Compend*, as of the old, will be its ability to lure students on from abbreviations to the plenitude of the classic original—demanding as that can be. Yet this new summary has its own self-contained integrity and viability: a brief, lucid, highly accessible text, well worth studying for its own sake as an introduction to Reformed theology. Hearty thanks to Hugh T. Kerr for the hard work his revision represents. May it prove as valuable a treasure for pastors, stu-

dents and all engaged in Christian education as did its predecessor—and for at least as many decades.

ALAN E. LEWIS

Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

*The Works of Richard Hooker*. W. Speed Hill, gen. ed. Vol. 5: *Tractates and Sermons*. The Folger Library Edition. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990. Pp. 926. \$100.

Hooker was the most distinguished theologian of the Elizabethan religious establishment, and he established the dominant doctrinal authorities of the Church of England, giving the primacy to scripture, next the tradition of the undivided church of the first five centuries, and lastly reason, especially in opaque or disputed matters.

The general editor, W. Speed Hill, is a well-known historian of the Renaissance period. The textual editor for this very complex set of manuscripts and texts is Laetitia Yeandle, and the commentator, Egon Grisliis, is also an able historian.

The first tractate deals with the important doctrine of justification by faith, which Hooker defends against the Roman Catholic insistence that works as well as faith are necessary for salvation. Hooker distinguishes between righteousness as imputation and the righteousness "in us" consisting of the Christian virtues.

Next in this volume is Hooker's answer to the *Supplication* of Walter Travers to the Privy Council begging to be returned as morning preacher at the Temple, where Hooker was afternoon preacher on Sundays. Travers, a very polemical Puritan, had criticized the doctrinal teaching of Hooker publicly and especially his exposition of the doctrines of predestination and the certainty of faith. Hooker's answer shows his tolerance and also that use of reason that caused him to be named the "judicious Mr. Hooker."

The first sermon to be printed in this volume is an analysis of the sin of pride, using the text, Habbakuk 2:4. He rebuts the charge that because the evil flourish God rules the world unjustly. He reminds the faithful of their future bliss as compensation and that their chief anchor must be the conviction that "the just shall live by faith." His gnomic summary is typical: "Affliction is both a medicine if we sin, and a preservative that we sin not" (p. 354).

The second sermon is a funeral homily, "A Remedy Against Sorrow and Fear." The compassion and generosity of Hooker appear in his description of the deceased: "She lived a Dove, and died a Lamb." In the same sermon he teaches that we should fear nothing more than not fearing at all, a not very helpful paradox!

The third sermon is on Matthew 7, "Ask and it will be given you," and insists upon the importance of petitionary prayer, for grace is promised to all serious endeavors.

Finally, there are three fragments of sermons. Their texts are respectively, Matthew 27:46, Hebrews 2:14-15, and Proverbs 3:9-10. The first is the most interesting

since it deals with Christ's cry of dereliction on Golgotha, and one would like to have the complete sermon. For Hooker there is a distinction between "a dereliction of probation and reprobation, of utter refusal, and a dereliction of trial only" (p. 399). No one, not even Christ, is free from the sense of the loss of God.

The sermons show Hooker's wide knowledge of scripture, his wisdom in expounding it in a way that would appeal to the lawyers of the Temple, and his theological expertise.

These reflections have been made possible by the impressive textual scholarship and the admirable historical *mise-en-scene* provided by the editors.

HORTON DAVIES  
Center of Theological Inquiry

Leith, John H. *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989. Pp. 230. \$16.95.

Not every doctoral dissertation wears well after forty years. This one does. This volume is an update of Leith's 1949 thesis at Yale University with his preface and a foreword by the late Albert Outler, an advisor and reader of the dissertation. The minimal changes reflect current language usage. Since dissertation days, Leith has become a distinguished Reformed theologian and veteran teacher at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia (1959-89). His later scholarly writings in many ways stem from the interests and directions of this thesis.

It is timely to have this work, not just for its careful scholarship in the Calvin corpus and secondary literature of the last generation, but also because its topic is perennially important. Calvin's comprehensive vision is immediate from Leith's first sentence: "The end of the Christian life is the glory of God, which, as the highest human goal, is of far greater importance than all corporal good and even the salvation of one's soul." With such a vision, Calvin's version of the shape of Christian existence needs to be heard and reckoned with fully. Those yet to be gripped by Calvin can do no better than turn here to perceive why his theology has been compelling through four centuries. Leith introduces us to the profundities of Calvin's thinking about what is vitally practical to all Christians.

After initially outlining the lineaments of the Christian life, namely, the glory of God, Jesus Christ, the law, the Bible, repentance, mortification and vivification, and the ethos of the Christian life, the remaining four chapters take up the Christian life in relation to justification by faith alone, providence and predestination, history and the transhistorical, and church and society. Throughout, Calvin sought faithfully to interpret the Bible which he regarded as the Word of God. Leith's guidance is balanced on Calvin's view of scripture and inspiration. He believes "Warfield seems to go too far in his assertions that Calvin admitted no errors in the scriptures," and that "there is more freedom in his use of scripture than either Warfield or Seeberg admits." Yet, "P. Barth and others of his school of thought have placed too

much emphasis on the instances in which Calvin points out some discrepancy and have overlooked the fact that in actual practice Calvin used the Bible as though it were verbally inspired." Leith is historically sensitive when he writes: "It is critically important to accept Calvin as a sixteenth-century theologian for whom today's questions had not been raised and hence are not answered in his theology."

Leith is also balanced in that while he clearly portrays Calvin's teachings, he also indicates where Calvin was inconsistent or did not live up to his own principles or instincts. Six inconsistencies are noted. These concern the glory of God, law, scripture, predestination, and the church. For Leith, "these contradictions reveal the conflict between Calvin the exegete of scripture and Calvin the systematizer of scripture. . . . In almost every case they have resulted from his systematic rationalization of the anomalies of revelation and Christian experience."

Leith concludes that because of the "personal core of Calvin's thought," he does not fit into "fundamentalism." Yet Calvin is not conceded to the "crisis theologians" who "overlook Calvin's affinities with present-day fundamentalism." Rightly Leith says Calvin's "contributions to our day can be preserved only by recognizing those affinities and correcting them in the light of the wider knowledge of the Christian community."

Leith's final paragraphs capture the essence. The source of Calvin's doctrine of the Christian life is in "the intensely personal and deeply mutual relationship of the Christian to God. The inner unity of the Christian life and of Calvin's theology as a whole is not some abstract principle but the vital fact that we have to do with the living God every moment of our life. The Christian life is not the achievement of an ideal or slavish obedience to a code of morals. It is the living and spontaneous human response to God's grace." Leith characterizes Calvin's doctrine here as a "magnificent effort." We can be grateful to John Leith for bringing this effort clearly to light.

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Templeton, John Marks and Robert L. Herrmann. *The God Who Would Be Known*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989. Pp. 214. \$19.95.

Both members of the American Scientific Affiliation, the authors of this book form a remarkable team. They survey the way our modern scientific culture has been compelled to acknowledge the necessity for the transcendent dimensions inherent in the universe. Their expertise in widely divergent fields gives both scope and depth to their effort to inform their readers of the present state and crucial problems in the various fields of investigation into the nature of physical reality. John Templeton, financial manager and patron of the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion, is well versed in the principles of success within the created orders as



well as an avid encourager in the redemptive orders of the creation. Robert Herrmann, Executive Director of ASA, is a professor of biochemistry and a molecular biologist well acquainted with the nuts and bolts of research and the struggle to gain conceptual power grounded in the empirical world of our experience.

The primary aim of the book is to contribute to a positive dialogue between theology and science. In the first chapter the authors argue that the conflict between science and theology is a result of the split between metaphysical and physical dimensions of reality created by both bad science and bad theology. The history of the development of thought shows that the universe does not explain itself to us but rather possesses what the authors call "signals of transcendence," to which we must now give serious heed.

Chapter two attempts to show us how the split between nature and supernature, reason and belief, knowledge and faith, caused the church to abandon the world to the scientists and the paranormalists. The result was the determinism and the deism developed on the basis of belief in a Newtonian universe. But Einstein's work has helped us to overcome these false dichotomies in the foundations of our knowledge and has cleared a path for the advances we have made in recent years.

Chapter three argues for the need to move beyond the chance-necessity dialectic at the heart of so much of our thinking today, and chapter four examines the nature of uniqueness in the complex orders of creation. Included in the latter are discussions of John Archibald Wheeler and the anthropic principle. The strong interpretation of the principle means that this world is to be conceived as the home of the race. Only in the universe that actually is could humanity arise as it has. The "big questions" are understood as inherent in the nature of things. A unitary view of the universe and God is demanded in which the role of humankind is given a basis in the hidden depths of the reality of the creation.

In chapter five, Herrmann employs his expertise to analyze the great breakthrough in bio-logics with the discovery of DNA and argues that, far from pointing us back to deterministic views of the processes that comprise the world, the evolution of biological forms confronts us with a complexity demanding quite new concepts that will deepen our grasp of the rationality and intelligibility in this exciting field.

I found chapter six the most satisfying part of the argument. Here the concept of the contingent nature and rationality of created realities is given serious attention. The authors refer us to Thomas Torrance's work. This Scottish theologian has championed an appreciation of the concept of contingency in our time and was awarded the Templeton Prize for his contributions. His work helped to found the Center of Theological Inquiry at Princeton. Torrance calls us to penetrate more deeply than ever into the lability of the nature of the universe and to discover truly new categories of rationality that take us quite beyond the random-deterministic dialectic still employed today by so many. We must learn to grasp a hidden center of the order of things where we can breathe real transcendent air. This will require,



Torrance argues, a fresh appreciation of the divine and contingent orders and freedoms with the power of a conceptual wholeness free from the static reductionism commonly found in the old sciences.

In subsequent chapters the authors attempt to expand the implications of their thesis into areas that involve moral as well as physical law, where both what *is* and what *ought* to be may be considered as intrinsic and inherent in the *nature* of the universe. The final step of the argument is that it is in worship of God that we shall find the meaning, rationality, and wholeness that will allow us to see both the transcendent and the visible dimensions of the unique process that the universe is under God's mighty hand. As readers, we have been brought full circle to the initial contention of the authors that the "signals of transcendence" now being sent us from almost every field of knowledge are real and most worthy of our committed attention.

Many questions were raised for me as I read through the argument. I have a deep reservation about the authors' appreciation of the freedom of God in relation to the world. This is perhaps a theologian's right with scientists who, in the history of thought, have tended to think away the significance of the contingency of the world. What is the actuality of the free relation between a free Creator and a free creature? If the relation cannot be conceived as a necessary one, how may divine and created causes be understood together so as to give nature its meaning and form and content? How then shall we distinguish what ought to be from what merely can be achieved in our future in the world? If revelation and reason cannot be held apart the way they have been in the past, how shall we learn to take seriously the reality of evil in the midst of our quest for the intelligibility of the world? Indeed, what is the relation of evil to the argument of the book in particular and to our scientific endeavors in general? How do we describe the activity of the one triune God revealed in the scriptures of the church as the real source of all the rationality and intelligibility in the universe?

I realize that all these questions are bound up with the role and cogency of "natural theology" in the light of God as revealed to us in Christ. Natural theology is best understood not as an antecedent conceptual system, but as one which assumes its shape and content from the divine light of the Word of God. This Word is what we need to hear if my questions are going to be answered, and it is this Word for which our authors have certainly argued. For this we owe them a debt.

Scientists and theologians who want to enter the ever-widening scope of our concerns for the relationship between the two fields will find this book true to its purpose—to introduce both to the kind of openness and integrity that further progress will require, a progress upon which the entire human race depends perhaps more desperately in our time than ever before in history. I commend it to all who share these concerns.

JOHN E. McKENNA  
Fuller Theological Seminary

Niles, D. Preman. *Resisting the Threats to Life: Covenanting for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation*. Geneva: WCC Publications, Risk Book Series, 1989. Pp. 95. \$5.95.

When I heard for the first time the words, "justice, peace, integrity of creation," I was overwhelmed. For anyone with a similar response to the subtitle, this will be a specially helpful book. Those acquainted with the intricacies of JPIC, as it has come to be known, will still find help in this volume. Preman Niles, from Sri Lanka, until recently directed the program and shares from within the beginnings and progress of the work.

Today, everyone is aware of the need to change. We speak of global warming, are concerned with the destruction of ancient forests, worry about energy use and pollution. We speak also about issues of justice and peace. Most people do. Has the Christian community a distinctive contribution to the perception and the struggle? That is the question.

Niles chronicles the work on the interlinked themes and the possible contribution of the world church. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches, meeting in Ottawa, Canada in 1982, asked the WCC to initiate a covenant for peace and justice. The Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver, Canada in 1983, issued an invitation to its member churches "to engage . . . in a conciliar process of mutual commitment (covenant) to justice, peace, and the integrity of creation." Then the World Council worked to include the Roman Catholic and other nonmember churches.

Regional meetings between 1983–1990 were part of the process of preparation for a World Convocation in 1990. Most regions had good or very good meetings with varying degrees of participation from nonmember churches. The European meeting in May, 1989, in Basel, Switzerland had full Roman Catholic participation with the European Council of Churches (Protestant and Orthodox). North America held no meeting.

The genius of the threefold theme is the recognition that lack of justice in society means oppression and violence, hence, lack of peace. The way individuals and communities live with each other is the way they live in creation—without justice or peace for other creatures, the earth, and the elements. We must learn to retrace this cycle. Listen to the voice of an Aymara Indian, Bishop Mamani from Bolivia:

Our Aymara communities, and those of all Andean native peoples, are participatory. Our sense of community extends to the relationship between people and all of creation. It includes safeguarding the harmony of nature. If the churches are really concerned for the integrity of creation, they will have to recover a gospel that is good news for all of creation (p. 16).

To recover the gospel that is good news for all of God's creation requires that we rethink who we are, what our role and relationship to other creatures are, and, that

we perceive our imbeddedness in nature. Whatever transcendence the Creator implanted in humans, it is for responsibility, not for mastery and ownership over creation. To recover that gospel would move us toward justice and peace. The recovered gospel would be our contribution to the world struggle to keep and heal creation.

This brief volume remains the only descriptive account on the preparatory work for the World Convocation held in Seoul, Korea in March 1990. The text of the affirmations and covenants—grown to four with a covenant against racism—is now available under the title, *Now Is the Time*. A large number of books on each of the themes is readily available. One paperback that is not very visible but covers all three themes with accuracy and insight is *Shalom*. A recent volume in the Risk Series by Krister Stendahl, *Energy for Life: Reflections on the Theme "Come, Holy Spirit—Renew the Whole Creation,"* brings the threefold theme into the preparatory work for the Seventh Assembly, Canberra, Australia, 1991. All three books are available from: Publications, U. S. Office of the WCC, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 915, New York, N.Y., 10115-0050. For congregational use, one may watch for a six session Bible study offering theological reflection on the integrity of creation, justice, and peace that is being prepared by the Theology and Worship Unit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for the summer of 1991.

AURELIA T. FULE  
Louisville, KY

Rediger, G. Lloyd. *Ministry and Sexuality: Cases, Counseling, and Care*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990. Pp. 156. \$10.75.

Rediger's gift to readers and their ecclesial communities is a humane and lucid invitation to deal responsibly with incidents and issues of clergy sexual malfeasance.

Rediger responsibly uses pastoral data gathered over nineteen years from his confidential counseling work with clergy experiencing sexual problems. Through specific case presentations readers must directly encounter that which has long been the subject of underground gossip and which has more recently been aired in the press: clergy are sexual beings who can also be sex offenders.

Rediger operates within an experiential framework which suggests that 10% of clergy are offenders engaged in sexual malfeasance (now or in the past); that 15% of clergy are on the verge of crossing the line that distinguishes healthy from unhealthy expressions of human sexuality; and that the remaining 75% of clergy may be at risk unless sexual issues are more openly and responsibly dealt with throughout the church. Readers may variously experience shock, recognition, anguish, and/or a compassionate commitment to take these "pastoral data" with full seriousness. Such seriousness would mean, for Rediger, full and frank discussion of specific instances of clergy sexual malfeasance. These conversations must also include com-

pletely candid discussions of both clergy roles and the availability of clergy support systems within the perspectives of a sexual theology.

Rediger organizes his materials around four issues, the first being the dynamics of what he calls the "star factor" as associated with the pastoral role, and the related inclination not to recognize pastoral vulnerability amid the very real situational temptations toward sexual malfeasance within the role itself, i.e., expectation of intimacy, issues of dependency, and heightened emotionality. While his reporting and analysis focus on clergy, here, to his credit, he seeks to "see" through the eyes of victims.

In the second section he groups situations of clergy sexual malfeasance under the rubric of addiction. Cases presented in the categories of sexual addiction, affairs, incest, pedophilia, rape, and sexual harassment are introduced, stated, and then commented upon. The third section reports on a variety of issues: homosexual orientation, masturbation, sexual torment, sexual incompatibility, and transvestism. In closing, Rediger offers perspectives on care for clergy sexuality and several guides for ethical behavior. Guidelines for prevention and support are also included.

The publication of these cases is commendable. Much as Seward Hiltner was the first theologian to respond to the early Kinsey Reports, so does Rediger challenge all readers to deal with data that they may not like, but that shout out something about the human, and more specifically the clergy, situation. The invitation to dialogue about the need for sexual ethics in the ministry, for support structures for clergy, and for placing the dialogue within the perspectives of a contemporary sexual theology must not be argued. It is educationally and professionally irresponsible not to have such discussions intrinsic to (not elective within) a seminary curriculum. Denominational executives are to be held accountable by all for addressing specific situations directly and for responsible ways of processing them that do justice to victims as well as care for a variety of personal dynamics.

Hopefully Rediger's courageous beginning will bear fruit in other crucial areas of sexual dialogue. The cases are primarily those of male subjects; what dynamics and definitions of malfeasance might emerge if clergy female sexuality were similarly explored? It is too easy to see these issues as only manifestations of the problematics of male sexuality. We hope that the same openness to disclosure would mark female malfeasance, and that it not be obscured by denial as male malfeasance was hidden through power manipulations.

Rediger's work is interpreted through the framework of an emerging sexual theology as defined by James Nelson. It would be worthwhile to discuss the same issues within the framework of Carter Heyward's sexual theology as well as to be aware that there are crucial cross-cultural, social class, and theological differences concerning this very genre of sexual theology. Rediger's incisive invitation is only a beginning; we should not be surprised to see alternative frameworks for moral discourse about clergy sexual ethics emerge.

ANNE WOODDELL HEATH AND PEGGY ANN WAY  
Eden Seminary



Armstrong, Richard. *The Pastor-Evangelist in the Parish*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990. Pp. 244. \$13.95.

This book is for pastors who want to take seriously a quickening of concern for evangelism in the American church but don't know what to do about it. It makes equally compelling reading for those who brush the whole thing aside with the remark, "Everything I do is evangelism, and besides, my job is to equip others to do it."

Professor Armstrong, recently retired from Princeton Theological Seminary's Ashenfelter chair of Ministry and Evangelism, knows how to talk both to the convinced and the unconvinced. He writes from a life of experience ranging from professional baseball to the parish ministry and theological education. His style is practical and personal and enriched with illustrations remarkably relevant to actual parish situations.

This is the third in a series of three volumes on the pastor as evangelist. In two earlier works he has described an urban ministry in a fast changing neighborhood, *The Oak Lane Story*, and, in his classic, *Service Evangelism*, he laid down the foundational premise of all his writings: evangelism is rooted in "the biblical image of the church as the servant people of God." Now he has written the best book of his career.

From the earlier works he draws what he calls a "textbook" definition of evangelism. Its prerequisites are faithfulness to Bible standards, theological integrity about God and human nature, a living, personal faith and a love for all kinds of people. Then the definition, given with the reminder that different situations call for different approaches: Evangelism is both proclamation and calling. It proclaims the kingdom of God by word and deed. It calls to repentance, to personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, to active church membership, and to obedient service in the world. As Armstrong goes on to describe it, evangelism is a sharing of one's faith, never coercive but confessional, not arguing a position but affirming the power of faith in real life, and always remembering that "the ultimate converter of human hearts is God alone."

Furthermore, evangelism does not live by definition. It comes to life for the pastor only when he or she moves beyond reflection and routine—necessary though both study and schedule will always be—and discovers evangelistic possibilities at every level and in all the multiple responsibilities of the parish ministry today. The book divides into six parts, one for each of six major roles a pastor is called upon to play: visitor, counselor, teacher, discipler, administrator, and public figure. Evangelism not only fits effectively into all the roles; it is indispensable to them all for the health of the parish.

Admittedly, not every pastor readily adds evangelism to a list of indispensables. In pastoral visitation, for example, isn't evangelism an invasion of privacy? That depends on how it is done. This section of the book recognizes the value of social calling and the immense importance of simply getting acquainted. But no pastoral

call is strictly social, and if the visiting never gets beyond the superficial, it is not wrong to terminate a no-win situation.

When the pastor is counselor, doesn't that call for listening, not evangelizing? But that is a false disjunction, says Armstrong. Beware of psychology without theology, and vice versa. "Most psychological theorists have no place for sin in their understanding of human nature." And by the same token most pastors are amateurs as psychologists. The rule is: know when to refer!

The sections on the pastor as teacher and as discipler explore how to introduce evangelism into the familiar but not always welcoming environment of the church congregation. They contain chapters relating to the pulpit, teaching style, worship, stewardship, service, and leadership, in ways sometimes surprising but always practical.

Even the pastor as administrator is an evangelist in Armstrong's book. From fifty to seventy percent of the pastor's time, he finds, will be occupied with administration in one form or another. For some this can be frustrating. But Armstrong recalls that the biblical term for the gift of administration is derived from the word for "steering the ship." That makes the pastor-administrator more than a mere manager. He or she is helmsman and navigator for the whole congregation. As such, the pastor-evangelist in the parish will find windows of evangelistic opportunity to open in every one of the many offices of the pastorate.

This is a book for our times, for every pastor, and indeed for all Christians insofar as we believe in the priesthood of all believers.

SAMUEL HUGH MOFFETT  
Princeton, NJ

*The Pastor as Religious Educator.* Robert L. Browning, ed. Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1989. Pp. 277. \$14.95.

Many pastors report being inadequately prepared for educational ministry in the local church. They discover that Christian education is far more important to congregational life and mission than they ever suspected during their seminary years. What is a pastor to do? One suggestion is to discuss with other pastors and with laity this new book edited by Robert L. Browning.

While there are other books on the subject, *The Pastor as Religious Educator* is not the usual fare. The focus is not on running or coordinating the church's education program, but rather on important aspects of congregational revitalization and mission effectiveness. Pastors are portrayed as team leaders who, in partnership with laity, have particular responsibilities and opportunities for kindling vital personal and communal life in the local church.

Browning, Professor of Christian Education at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio, has assembled an able collection of writers. The writers are pastors and

seminary faculty with significant parish experience. Each is able to address the realities of church life and pastoral ministry with insight.

The book includes chapters on teaching the Bible, developing a leadership team, nurturing the prayer life of a congregation, and ways to link nurture and worship more closely together. The chapter on black pastoral leadership will be thought-provoking for all congregations. A chapter on the communications revolution and its impact on the congregation is a timely contribution. The book concludes with case studies on pastoral leadership in a multi-cultural setting, and in "middle" America.

A frequent criticism of multi-author works is a general lack of unity and cohesiveness. While different writing styles, diverse points of view, and abrupt transitions in this collection give an unevenness common to a work of this nature, the consistent emphasis on a style of pastoral ministry that encourages ministry of the laity gives unity to the whole. Browning lays the foundation in the introduction, observing that the "priesthood of all believers" is no longer just a Protestant doctrine, but a source of vitality and renewal that belongs to the whole church. Of special note, valuable bibliographies after each chapter include Roman Catholic and Orthodox as well as Protestant sources.

Some readers will miss a chapter on specific ways for pastors to relate to the Sunday school or, for Roman Catholics, the CCD (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine). Another book by the same publisher, *Renewing the Sunday School and the CCD*, edited by D. Campbell Wyckoff, is a recommended companion to Browning.

Browning's book is a valuable resource for pastors and congregations, a book to ponder and share with anyone concerned about revitalization of the church and its educational ministry.

M. LUKE HARKEY

Boston University School of Theology

*And Blessed Is She.* David A. Farmer and Edwina A. Hunter, eds. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990. Pp. 247. \$18.95.

In quantity and quality this is a good book. It is timely in its general intention and in the opinion of any homiletician, it was overdue. This is not to imply that it is simply a supplier of role models. In the realm of preaching, role modelling may not be as necessary a phenomenon or vehicle as it can be in some other disciplines. The distinguished Welsh preacher, Trevor H. Davies, remarked one day to a group of seminarians: "I was never more completely a failure in my preaching than when I attempted to imitate someone else." As a contribution to the history of preaching, however, this collection of sermons by women, past and present, fills a void every teacher of homiletics has lamented.

The editors of this volume—David A. Farmer, a parish minister and editor of *The Pulpit Digest* and Edwina A. Hunter, professor of preaching at Union Theo-

logical Seminary—are to be complimented not only for the quality and diversity of their selections, but also for the arrangement and organization of their resources in a manner that makes the collection helpful and useful to a maximal degree.

The first section, which Farmer edits, contains a well-documented introductory essay on the emergence of female preachers in the eighteenth century and their increase during the eighteenth and nineteenth. He singles out seven whom he categorizes as “Women Preachers of the Past” and among them are featured such well-known names as Aimee Semple McPherson, Evangeline Booth, and Georgia Harkness. (Since Ms. Booth was British in origin, Farmer might have included with impunity the name of Maude Royden, a pivotal pioneer in the pulpit of the English-speaking world). The second section, prefaced by Hunter’s introductory essay, contains fifteen sermons under the general caption, “Contemporary Women Preachers,” and features several well-known names (e.g., Delaplane, Kelly, Mitchell, Zikmund, etc.) along with a significant number of newcomers to the roster of promising female voices in the American pulpit and homiletical classrooms.

The editors are to be commended especially for their originality in the overall format under which each contributor presents her message. There is, in every case, a short introductory essay outlining the occasion or context in which the sermon was delivered originally. Then, after the sermon, there follows a thoughtful commentary by the preacher upon her own sense of vocation and how she felt in reflection upon the immediacy of the spiritual exchange with her listeners. These parentheses are not merely brackets on either side of each sermon, but are suppliers of that extra editorial aide which makes the printed sermon more full of incident for the reader.

No reviewer can manage a commentary on each preacher separately. It is more appropriate to cite some general observations upon the character of the pulpit contributions of these female preachers whose stature in American religious circles is increasingly significant. Upon a careful reading of this compendium certain features are worthy of notice and, in these cases, commendation. The sermons by women preachers of the past are not as dated as one might expect. True, there is occasional allegorizing, but they are marked by conciseness (whereas sermons by men of that generation were often interminable), imagination, and with minor changes in verbal forms could be preached today. Many of these women were “firsts”—the first to be president of a Baptist Convention; the first to broadcast a sermon by radio; and the first to occupy a chair in theology in an American seminary. Notable also was their intention always to give priority to making a case for the gospel in its encounter with the prevailing culture rather than making a case for themselves.

More important to us, however, are the sermons by contemporary women preachers, all of whom in this collection are active as pastors, teachers, and writers. These are representative of what Hunter believes is “a new movement in preaching” and of an accounting of those “theological and homiletical visions that inform them on their way.” As one who spent a life’s career listening to student sermons



(ca. 6,600 in thirty-six years), this reviewer discovered in these examples the flowering of many strengths hoped for and encouraged: (i) even in cases of a topical sermon the biblical pericope provided the *raison d'être* for the moral and spiritual thrust; (ii) careful background study picked up subtle points in the pericope which for ages had been passed over unnoticed; (iii) the prophetic element is in the ascendancy (not spirit-rapping, but the impact of the "ought-ness" of the Unseen upon the "is-ness" of the seen); (iv) there is an easy handling of the preacher-worshiper encounter: here are the facts of the gospel to be interpreted according to your own need, or: this is how I experience it, will you think through it along with me? (v) one finds constant emphasis upon the communal character of the church; and (vi) there is an undercurrent of courage in disclosing every aspect of the human problem and the adequacy of the gospel to change and redeem it. In view of these positive characteristics, one is inclined to agree with Barbara Zikmund's remark: "I celebrate the fact that women clergy are doing some of the most creative preaching today" (p. 239).

DONALD MACLEOD

Princeton Theological Seminary

White, James F. *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989. Pp. 251. \$15.95.

In a review of this author's earlier monograph, *Christian Worship in Transition*, the feeling was expressed that another chapter was needed to fill out adequately the projected discussion. Professor White, a member of the graduate faculty at Notre Dame University and one of America's leading liturgists, has filled out in full measure what seemed to be lacking in a previous publication. In the course of twelve chapters he deals principally with nine liturgical traditions that come under the general umbrella of "Protestant," plus two introductory chapters and a final summing up. Altogether this appeared to be a rather ambitious agenda, yet the author has handled it well, due largely to his keeping each section within a narrow scope and his own intention constantly in control.

At the outset White states what he is about: "We shall spend little time on liturgical texts, service books, or sacramental theology, the staples of most liturgical scholarship. Eucharistic prayers will scarcely be mentioned. These are not our priorities. Rather, we are trying to delineate the phenomenon of Protestant worship as it happens for ordinary worshipers. Our concern is with the total event of public worship as it occurs in local churches, not as analyzed in textbooks. . . . How can we adequately describe in concise terms what actually happens in a service of Protestant worship?" (pp. 14, 15). With this objective in mind, his research took him "to hundreds of worshipping congregations" where people were "always quite willing to explain what it is that makes them feel at home in their kind of worship" (p. 10). His findings are the substance of this book and his competence in analyses and

arrangement makes interesting and highly informative reading. Given his basic intention, the overall result is more than satisfactory.

White launches his discussion by naming seven categories as a framework for describing the phenomenon of Protestant worship: people, piety, time, place, prayer, preaching, and music (p. 16). Then he leads out into discussions *seriatim* of nine "traditions," a term by which he denotes "inherited worship practices and beliefs that show continuity from generation to generation" (p. 21). These include Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist, Anglican, Separatist and Puritan, Quaker, Methodist, Frontier, and Pentecostal. He deals with each tradition separately and in well selected detail, yet the cumulative effect is our grasping the whole sweep of liturgical processes and changes that comprises the Protestant worship phenomenon throughout four centuries.

What are some of the characteristics that give a distinctive flavor to White's volume? First he begins with the basic understanding that worship is *leitourgia* (the work of the people) and concomitant with this basic fact he gathered his material and exercised his perspectives among average "grass roots" Sunday-to-Sunday lay worshipers. Second, he handles historical information and data in story-like form and hence avoids being tedious. Third his outlook is ecumenical; few writers in this field take the time to deal with or see significance in exploring "Frontier Worship" or "Pentecostal Worship" or even to see in these traditions anything more than emotional aberrations. Fourth, again and again he cites interesting parentheses often overlooked: e.g., regarding the Methodists—"What people sang became the theology they learned, and what they learned shaped their lives" (p. 157); "Shakers inspired others to sense the possibilities for worshiping with the whole body, provided hymns, advanced the concepts of feminine imagery in Christian worship, and showed how ascetic space can be eloquent as a setting for Christian worship" (p. 147); "Friends (Quakers) were the first to encourage women to act as equals in worship" (p. 139). Fifth, there is the author's optimism about Protestant worship, an elixir in any age, especially when negative evaluations and prognoses are in abundance.

Thus far, White's contribution to Protestant liturgical studies has been of inestimable value. It is hoped he might go on in his writing to a sort of Phase 3: Have the theological debates and convolutions of this twentieth century left their mark at all upon the meaning, forms, and textures of our worship? Cultural, sociological, and even geographical factors have made their influence felt upon and have shaped much of what is said and done at eleven o'clock on Sunday morning. But what about the theological differential? Will ministers, congregations, and "Statement of Faith" commissions cavil endlessly over credal minutiae and still tolerate acts of worship that are no more than "sanctified laundry lists"? We have work to be done and—I speak as a Presbyterian—James F. White can play a constructive role in it.

DONALD MACLEOD

Princeton Theological Seminary

*Services for Occasions of Pastoral Care: The Worship of God.* Supplemental Liturgical Resource 6. Prepared by the Ministry Unit on Theology and Worship for the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990. Pp. 142. \$6.95.

"Dying and death are supremely inconvenient. They never come at the right time. People who are inconvenienced appreciate appropriate help. Good help is simple, immediate, and practical" (p. 33).

This quote from the new volume of the Supplemental Liturgical Resource series, intended to describe the experience and needs of dying persons and their loved ones, seems equally applicable to those who face ministering to them. Dying and death are supremely inconvenient, never coming at the right time for pastors and others whose task it is to enter the threatening world of the broken and broken-hearted in order to attempt something called "care."

Pastors inconvenienced by dying and death will appreciate the simple, immediate, and practical help which is one gift of *Services for Occasions of Pastoral Care*, the sixth of seven Presbyterian worship resources produced since the early 1980s. Presbyterians who in such circumstances have envied other colleagues' little black breviaries once again can claim one for themselves (albeit battleship gray in color and conspicuously large in dimension). Such a book potentially can be misused to protect the anxious "care giver" more than to comfort the afflicted; but properly used it can provide the stabilizing order of familiar words of scripture, prayer, and ritual at those times when chaos threatens to rule the day.

The first of three introductory chapters is a brief (exclusively androcentric) history of pastoral care from the Hebrew prophets through the contemporary period. This chapter links its history of pastoral care especially with varying practices of baptism, confession, and forgiveness through the ages.

The second chapter presents a Reformed theology of pastoral care, focusing on the priority of grace, justification, and acceptance in the reformers' understanding of care, leading to the now familiar emphasis on a "ministry of presence." Although unnecessarily suspicious of contributions from modern psychological theory, the chapter appropriately recognizes the mutuality of care between the so-called care "giver" and "receiver." Stepping into the world of the suffering involves entering "a sphere where Christ is already present," so that we see the patient not as "a passive recipient of care," but rather as one who offers grace and care in return (p. 26).

The third chapter offers practical guides for ministry with the sick and dying, touching upon the art of conversation, prayer, scripture-reading, and the demeanor of the pastoral visitor. This chapter might be helpful reading for an introductory course in pastoral care or Clinical Pastoral Education, as well as for training deacons, elders, or other laypersons for hospital calling.

Following these introductory chapters is a series of scriptural sentences, extended

passages of scripture (NRSV), prayers, suggested hymns, and orders of service for various circumstances of pastoral care. There are brief prayers for diverse situations involving, for example, a sick child, those in a coma, or those choosing to withdraw a life-support system. Suggested orders of worship are provided for healing services with congregations and for individuals unable to attend public worship. I welcome the inclusion in these services of ancient practices of anointing with oil and the laying on of hands, healing rituals lost to many contemporary Presbyterians. Welcome, too, are brief rituals of repentance and forgiveness which could be suggested for individuals or couples, for example, at the conclusion of a pastoral counseling conversation. Finally, there are outlines of services for the renewal of baptismal vows for the dying and for ministering to families at the time of death.

Part of a series intended as a trial run for a new Presbyterian service book, this volume attempts to be many things to many people. It can give the impression that it is a book not quite secure in its purpose, bordering on becoming a somewhat excessive collection of outlines. Yet pastors and laypersons who struggle for words at times when words are not enough will value its guidance for reclaiming pastoral rituals for confession, healing, and dying.

ROBERT C. DYKSTRA

The Medical Center at Princeton, NJ

Brawley, Robert L. *Centering on God: Method and Message in Luke-Acts*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990. Pp. 256.

This book by a professor of New Testament at Memphis Theological Seminary is well-conceived, well-written, and persuasively argued. Part of the new series by Westminster/John Knox Press on Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation, it is a very readable volume that addresses issues and questions on Luke-Acts and beyond that should be of direct interest to scholars, clergy, and laypersons. Clergy and laypersons will find the volume interesting, if not arresting and challenging, because it is respectful of broader religious and popular cultural issues. Scholars will find the volume a very fair and responsible treatment of the text and of hermeneutical issues, as well as an example of solid scholarship that is accessible to a wide and diverse audience.

The author consistently shows himself aware of his own presuppositions and assumptions by referring to his own social (and political-economic) location as a strong factor in his interpretive leanings and arguments. This inspires him at the outset to be open to many different methods and approaches to the study of religious texts and Luke-Acts in particular. Literary criticism is finally embraced more heartily than other methods because it more than other methods avoids the splintering of mind and understanding, "the fragmentation of analysis" that often leads to the substitution of an admittedly necessary secondary text ("metatext") for the original text that, unfortunately, has little correspondence to the original text. Al-



legorical interpretations, historical-critical methods with a liberal theological agenda, and conservative cultural readings all reflect the tendency toward fragmentation and substitution of the original text with a secondary text.

The need, according to Brawley, is for an attempt at a synthesis that will, employing "wide-ranging" methods, offer a coherent and "self-authenticating" text ("by virtue of its genuine correspondence" to the text that is, in this instance, Luke-Acts). This need leads Brawley to literary critic Roland Barthes and the latter's view of texts as networks of complexity "woven" out of five "voices"—(1) the hermeneutic voice, (2) the voice of semes [i.e., signifiers], (3) the proairetic voice [i.e., the voice of action], (4) the cultural voice, and (5) the symbolic voice. The chapter divisions (chapters two through eight) of Brawley's book roughly correspond to these five "voices."

What Brawley seeks above all is to address the complexity of interpretation of Luke-Acts by embracing not only the different "voices" that constitute it as text, but also the "point of view" and level of "reliability" of the narrative. By taking note that there are different points of view (again, five!) and different levels of reliability in the narrative that is Luke-Acts, Brawley successfully convinces his reader of the complexity of interpretation and challenges all interpreters to embrace multiple methods and approaches that can result in what he claims for his work—informed, coherent interpretation.

Employing multiple methods, Luke-Acts is understood by Brawley as preeminently theological, viz., about the imperative and nature of the divine plan. It is, therefore, to be understood and appropriated theocentrically and in terms of "world-encompassing" challenge, not in terms of general truths, biblical principles and propositions, or role models. Luke-Acts, according to Brawley, can best be appropriated through analogy (emphasizing here both similarity and difference between the theocentric world of the text and the interpreter's world), identification ("buying into the portrayed world of the Bible"), and by extending the narrative to the time situation of the interpreter. Luke, by merely pointing to the parousia without having it be realized in the narrative, allows the modern reader to extend the story into the present.

Ultimately, however, analogies, identifications, and extensions notwithstanding, Brawley is aware of the fact that there are always tensions between the text and the Lukan worldview and the world of the modern reader. In the last chapter (nine), he addresses the challenge of a synthesis of the different methods and approaches by addressing the problem of the tension. Because modern readers will understand themselves differently and find themselves in different social locations, situations, and challenges, not all will agree with Brawley's description of the tension between the modern worldview and Luke's worldview. (In the end he even writes autobiographically.) But all will appreciate his effort to speak in an intellectually honest, straightforward, and passionate manner.

This book, then, is must reading for all those who would be challenged by honest,

clear-headed, critical, and prophetic thinking that makes connections and helps one "to center on God."

VINCENT L. WIMBUSH  
Union Theological Seminary

Falla, Terry C. *A Key to the Peshitta Gospels*, Vol. 1: *ʿĀlaph-Dālath*. New Testament Tools and Studies, vol. 14. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991. Pp. xl + 136 + Appendix of Supplementary References, English Index, and Alphabetic Directory of Syriac Terms. \$63.00.

Students familiar with the series, New Testament Tools and Studies, written or edited by Bruce Metzger, or compiled under his direction, appreciate the wealth of information and judicious scholarly judgment these volumes provide. They present an enticing menu of painstaking research that one appropriates with feelings of gratitude akin to awe. This first volume of Terry Falla's *Key to the Peshitta Gospels* supplies another useful, new study in the series. A member of the New Zealand Baptist Theological College faculty of the University of Auckland, Falla has been at work on this project for most of his adult life. He finished the first part, the analytical concordance, in 1969, and the preface in December, 1989.

The goal of his work is to provide "a complete concordance and a comprehensive critical guide to the Greek behind the Syriac" translation of the Gospels, as well as information essential to study of the Peshitta itself (p. xix). The Peshitta, i.e., the "simple" or "common" version of the Syriac Bible, is generally agreed to be a fourth century revision of the Old Syriac version that probably originated in the third century. The time of its origin makes the Peshitta an important witness to the Greek text of the New Testament, and Falla's work is based on the only critical edition of the Syriac gospels we have, that of P. E. Pusey and G. H. Gwilliam (Oxford, 1901). Falla has written for students who want to learn Syriac "by way of the Peshitta Gospels," as well as for advanced students of Syriac grammar and usage. The *Key* lists every Syriac word in Pusey and Gwilliam's edition, its root, form, English translation, qualifications that elucidate or exemplify that translation, other Syriac words of similar meaning, the corresponding Greek term for each Syriac word, and a complete sequential concordance of references. A 22-page introduction explains in detail Falla's purpose and method, his citation and arrangement of the material, considerations of factors at work in evaluating Syriac-Greek correspondence, and ways in which the *Key* can be exploited, e.g., to study translation techniques.

An astonishing quantity of information is made available in this slim volume, and the format for its presentation has been carefully designed to make that information easily accessible. Potentially troublesome particles and words are given extensive treatment. The inseparable particle, *d*, e.g., receives eight columns that clearly identify, by explanation and example, peculiarities and ambiguities of its use

in Syriac. The inseparable preposition, *b*, receives twenty-four columns, the conjunction, *'aph*, and its compounds, more than six columns, and the various compounds and phrases incorporating the noun, *baytā*, receive six columns. The lists at the end include proper names. In addition to inviting a study of the names themselves, the lists make information in the *Key* even easier to locate.

This unpretentious and thorough work will greatly facilitate comparative study of the Greek and Syriac Gospel texts, and provide incentive and help for text-critical use of the Peshitta in Gospel research; it will enlarge a student's grasp of Syriac vocabulary and usage; and, it can contribute to an understanding of the complex relationship between the LXX, Hebrew Bible, and the Peshitta. Terry Falla, Bruce Metzger, and the publisher E. J. Brill deserve our admiration and gratitude for producing this excellent research tool.

JOHN H. MARKS  
Princeton University

*Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*. Vol. 1. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, eds. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990. Pp. xxiv + 488. \$39.95.

This is an English translation of the first of three volumes of a German work published in 1978-80 under the title *Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*. Less exhaustive than the twelve volumes of Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (which began to be published in German prior to the Second World War), this newer work advances the discussion by summarizing more recent treatments of numerous questions. Furthermore, it combines the best features of a lexicon and a theological dictionary of the Greek New Testament.

For every word (including every proper name) in the New Testament, this work provides identification and discussion of instances of the word in the New Testament, with a guide to usage in different literary and theological contexts. When appropriate, information is supplied relating to the background of a given word in classical Greek, the Septuagint, post-Old Testament Judaism, and Hellenistic literature. Many words are given detailed treatment of exegetical problems, concluding with a discussion of the word's contribution to the theology of the New Testament.

The numerous contributors have been drawn from a wide range of scholars, international in scope and interconfessional. The project was planned from the outset to be ecumenical, and the editorial direction is under the supervision of Horst Balz, professor of New Testament theology and history at the University of Bochum, Germany, and Gerhard Schneider, professor of New Testament at the Catholic Theological Faculty, University of Bochum.

A sampling of the articles in the first volume, which extends from "Aaron" to "Enoch," indicates a wealth of readable and reliable information. It will no doubt

become an indispensable tool for the student of the New Testament as well as for the homiletician.

BRUCE M. METZGER  
Princeton Theological Seminary

Robinson, Thomas A. *Mastering Greek Vocabulary*. Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990. Pp. 192. \$7.95.

Almost all of us learned that one of the most difficult tasks in mastering Greek is obtaining a workable vocabulary. The Greek language has an extensive number of words (more like Syriac and Arabic than Hebrew and Aramaic); the NT alone has 5432 words. Now T. A. Robinson publishes an attractive way to increase—or refresh—our mastery of a vocabulary designed for our own needs, as pastors or scholars. Attractive is the long list of familiar words in English that are “identical” with Greek, notably *ankyra* (anchor), *arōma* (aroma), *derma* (skin), *emeō* (emit), *kau-sis* (caustic), *mammē* (mamma), *spongōs* (sponge), *stomachos* (stomach), *hygiēs* (hygienic), *chrisma* (charism). With such a start in the first lesson the student overcomes the fear that Greek is totally foreign.

The book has five sections: Identical Greek/English Words, Cognate Groups (the bulk of the work, pp. 9-118), Derived English Words (a fascinating review of the Greek base of many English words), Prefixes and Suffixes, an Appendix (Grimm’s Law), two charts, and an index of cognate group terms.

How is Robinson’s book different from B. M. Metzger’s most helpful *Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek*? Metzger’s work is based on the frequency of a word in the NT. Robinson’s book is ordered on the frequency of the occurrence of a cognate root. The latter is a useful supplement to the former. It also provides a memory aid for many roots, and clarifies the meaning of prefixes and suffixes. This user friendly book is an appealing way to brush up on your Greek vocabulary or acquire a more extensive vocabulary. It is attractively printed and inexpensive.

JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH  
Princeton Theological Seminary

*The New Testament Background: Selected Documents*, revised edition. C. K. Barrett, ed. San Francisco, New York, Cambridge: Harper & Row, 1989. Pp. xxix + 359. \$14.95.

New Testament students are astounded by the abundance of primary materials that have become essential reading for a full understanding of the origins of Christianity. A few decades ago, for example, we had 7 Dead Sea Scrolls and 17 Pseudepigrapha; now we have over 170 Dead Sea Scrolls (mostly in fragments) and 65 Pseudepigrapha. And, of course, there are the other Jewish documents and the ever-increasing quantity of non-Jewish writings. A selected guide to the sources available in 1956 was published by the distinguished British New Testament expert, C. K.



Barrett. Now, in 1989, he considerably updates and expands this earlier authoritative handbook.

The work has thirteen sections. Section one (Roman Empire) is increased by the addition of Dio Cassius' reference to Domitian. Section two (Papyri) is expanded by two excerpts from the *Epistles of Diogenes* (and P. Ryl. 175 is now correctly numbered. For more on the papyri see the invaluable collection arranged by G. H. R. Horsley [*New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, 5 vols. North Ryde, N.S.W. Australia]). Section three (Inscriptions) is expanded by citations from two ossuaries at Talpioth that bear the name *Iēsous* (the note is judicious). Section four (Philosophers and Poets) is increased by an excerpt from Aristotle and four quotations from the poets (Aristophanes, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides). The *Hermetica*, which is reworked and lengthened, is now subsumed under section five, titled "Gnosis and Gnosticism," which is wisely expanded by three excerpts from the Nag Hammadi Codices and two from the Mandaean Literature (but no excerpts from the Church Fathers). Section six (Mystery Religions) is lengthened by another excerpt from Plutarch and three Mithraic inscriptions (note the technical use of "father"). Section seven (Jewish History) is enriched by excerpts from Tacitus, two from Philo, another from Josephus' *War*, and three from Juvenal's *Satire* (many primary, indeed eyewitness, accounts of events and people [including Anthony, Pompey, and Nero] could have been gleaned from brief comments in the Jewish apocryphal works). Section eight (Rabbinic Literature and Rabbinic Judaism) is increased by four additional citations, including the Qaddish Prayer which is so important for understanding the Lord's Prayer (and the citation of *Sanhedrin* 10 is corrected). Section nine is new and focused on the Dead Sea Scrolls, which had been noted only briefly in an appendix (this improvement does not seem to be according to clear guidelines; there is no excerpt from the dualism defined at Qumran and nothing from the Temple Scroll or Angelic Liturgy). The excerpts in section 10 and 11 (Philo and Josephus) are virtually unchanged, except that Slavonic Josephus is replaced by Josephus as Interpreter of Scripture. Section 12, on the Septuagint, is expanded to include the Targumim (on Genesis 1, 22, and Isaiah 52-53). The final section on Jewish apocalypticism is essentially the same, except for the addition of "Mysticism" with six excerpts (which are sometimes too late for this collection and should have included the Angelic Liturgy, which makes the point intended and clearly antedates the first century B.C. The note to 277 goes with 278, and the note to 278 is appropriate for 279).

The book is written from a British perspective. For example, the good discussion of Jewish apocalypticism rightly points to its origins but cites the work of H. H. Rowley and does not mention P. Hanson (or the publications of Germans, Israelis, Italians, and others). The best recent work dismisses the claim that 4 Ezra is composite, redacted by Christians, and edited "at a later time" (p. 318). See, for example, the superb publication on 4 Ezra by B. M. Metzger in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth). The Psalms of Solomon are not a good example of

Jewish apocalypticism and it is far from certain that they "come from the Pharisaic party" (p. 320). Unfortunately the translations of the apocalypses, except for 3 Enoch, are by Charles, who did not really appreciate them and even altered the texts without support from the manuscripts. His translation of 1 Enoch 71 with its rationalistic emendation is repeated even though a note warns that it "does not represent the text of the MSS" (p. 344).

This criticism should help make Barrett's collection even more useful. He is certainly correct that the "need for a book of this kind is now greater than ever" (p. xx). The handbook remains attractive, handy, and inexpensive; and it is significantly updated, especially regarding the Nag Hammadi Codices and the Dead Sea Scrolls. I recommend it. We who teach NT 01 (Introduction to the New Testament) choose it as one of the required textbooks. New Testament study and preaching will be greatly enriched by reading from this collection. Reading a section a month would increase the power and authority of teachers and preachers.

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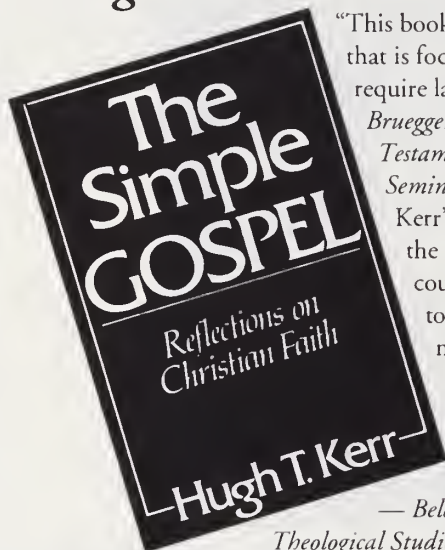
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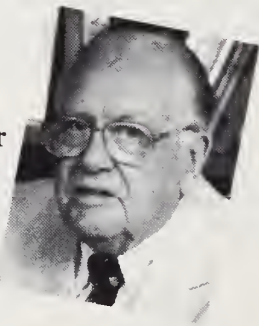
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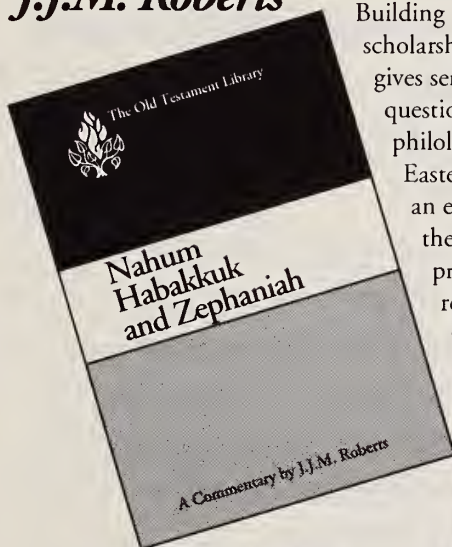
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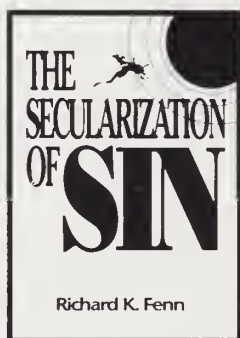
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